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**TOWARDS A SCIENCE OF LIBERTY:  
RECLAIMING A TRADITION IN CLASSICAL LIBERAL THOUGHT**

**ESSAYS SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD) ON THE BASIS OF PUBLISHED WORKS**

University of Middlesex

By Chris R. Tame

June 1998

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## INTRODUCTORY CONTEXT STATEMENT

### Contents:

- I: Unifying Theme
- II: The Nature and History of Classical Liberalism - Its Decline and Rise
- III: Applications - Social Theory and Sociology
- IV: Applications - History
- V: Applications - Political Philosophy
- VI: Applications - Culture and Literature
- VII: Conclusion - The Nature and Prospects of Liberalism

Notes

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### I: Unifying Theme

Most conventional academic works generally offer a highly restricted view of the history and nature of classical liberalism. This is perhaps not surprising since most book-length histories of the liberal tradition have been written by authors who are either outright ideological opponents (Harold Laski, **The Rise of European Liberalism**, Anthony Arblaster, **The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism**) (1) or at best luke-warm "neo-liberals", out of sympathy with core tenets of classical liberalism (Guido De Ruggiero, **The History of European Liberalism**, Jose G. Merquior, **Liberalism, Old and New**) (2). Even when the source of that restricted view is fairly obvious - ideological hostility or disdain - and can hence be taken into account, such accounts suffer from a deeper failure to perceive or portray the character of the

liberal tradition. However, worse still, in some respects, are works which actually reduce liberalism to a vague "tendency" or "attitude", and hence rob it of almost **any** sort of substantive character or content (Louis Hartz, **The Liberal Tradition in America**, Lionel Trilling, **The Liberal Imagination**, Ken Minogue, **The Liberal Mind**, Arthur A. Ekirch, **The Decline of American Liberalism**) (3). Text book accounts similarly tend to offer selective renditions of, for example, "Locke, Smith, Bentham and Mill" (or of some similar but equally restricted pantheon), as the sum-total of the liberal tradition (or at least the sum-total of that worthy of academic attention) (eg, George H. Sabine, **A History of Political Theory** and John Plamenatz, **Man and Society: A Critical Examination of Some Important Social and Political Thought From Machiavelli to Marx**) (4). In their choice of intellectual representatives all these renditions have in common a version of liberalism which tends to be narrowly economic in approach and/or restricted to empiricist, positivist, and utilitarian currents of thought. Indeed, it is also significant that there is actually no comprehensive, multi-volume history of liberalism - in comparison to the many such works on the history of socialism in general or Marxism in particular.

The works submitted in this application for PhD attempt to demonstrate that classical liberalism (or "libertarianism", to employ the more recent neologism for this intellectual tradition) was a richer, deeper and more systematic school of thought than is normally portrayed. They also try to analyse **why** that tradition went into decline, and why it has, in recent years, enjoyed a revival. A number of the essays are also attempts to apply that more systematic perspective to a number of topics in different disciplines.

## **II: The Nature and History of Classical Liberalism - Its Decline and Rise**

The conception of classical liberalism outlined in my submissions has most notably been embodied in the work of, and advocated by, the late Professor Murray Rothbard. In a brief obituary study of Rothbard, "**Creating a Science of Liberty: The Life and Heritage of**



**Murray N. Rothbard, 1926-1995**", I discuss his concept of classical liberalism as a systematic and hierarchical "**science of liberty**", an integrated, inter-disciplinary body of knowledge both analytical and normative. It was the torn fabric, so to speak, of liberalism which Rothbard hoped to weave back into a whole. Surprisingly, amongst all the recent appreciations of Rothbard's life and work, my essay is the only one to highlight this central and vital aspect of the Rothbardian "project".

Rothbard attempted further to systematise and then to extend the "praxeological" economics of the Austrian School, not merely in the study of market relationships but in a detailed typology and critique of all state intervention in the economy. Furthermore, he integrated that economic critique of state power with a vigorous moral one, based on a neo-Aristotelian/Thomistic natural rights ethics, replacing what he felt was the inadequate utilitarian morality of Von Mises. He further developed Austrian economics by recasting its methodological roots in an Aristotelian realism, rather than in the vaguer Kantian idealism of Mises and Hayek. In this he was, in actuality, returning to the earlier methodological roots of one of the School's founders, Carl Menger. It was such a historical rootedness in earlier liberal thought and scholarship that characterised much of Rothbard's thought. As Professor Stanislaw Andreski has pointed out (5), it is one of the major failings of much contemporary scholarship to ignore the work, and real discoveries, of earlier thinkers. Rothbard had an comprehensive knowledge of older scholarship and long-forgotten thinkers, and productively employed their insights in his own work. Indeed, it was this knowledge of the work of the founding fathers of British and French liberalism that, with their broader perspectives in historical sociology, led Rothbard to re-unite the three strands of original liberalism - its economics, ethics and its class and socio-historic analyses. It was this reintegration that Rothbard dubbed a "science of liberty", and although it is true that he himself did not complete the "Rothbardian project", its outlines and many of its details are perfectly clear.

The "science of liberty" was, significantly, the phrase used by Peter Gay in his definitive historical analysis, **The Enlightenment: An Interpretation**, to characterise the thought of the

**philosophes** (6). In my review-essay, "**The Revolution of Reason: Professor Gay, the Enlightenment, and the Ambiguities of Classical Liberalism**", I argue that liberalism as a systematic ideological/intellectual tradition was born in Enlightenment rationalism. The systematic ethical, political, economic and sociological science created by, for example, the "Scottish School" or "Scottish Enlightenment" of Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and John Millar, was one of the most ambitious and integrated versions of liberal doctrine, as Gay himself points out. However, my essay's principal contribution is to attempt to answer the question of **why**, after such a flourishing birth, liberalism declined in both scope and influence in the face of competing collectivist and statist doctrines. The essay is, to my knowledge, the only piece of writing to ask specifically, and attempt to answer, this question. (A paper on the same subject by Dr. Stephen Davies, in substantial agreement with mine, was also delivered at a conference I organised some years ago) (7).

My answer to this question is that the key elements of Enlightenment liberal thought all contain fatal ambiguities. Specifically, those ambiguities related to :

- \* the status of reason and the reason-emotion relationship
- \* the nature of human psychology
- \* the status of "natural law"
- \* the significance and implications of science.

Within each of these areas a failure to work out problems, or to apply insights correctly, led to unresolved problems or inadequate doctrines that enabled collectivist and statist strands of thought to emerge as alleged solutions or reactions to liberal formulations. Thus, the Enlightenment failure to resolve the reason-emotion dichotomy left the road open to doctrines proclaiming the primacy - psychological, political and moral - of the "passions", and hence to political movements seeking the fulfilment of alleged higher (or more basic!) emotional needs of man. Within psychology, fallacious approaches and emphases - those of Lockean "sensationalism" and "associationism" - led to the subtle undermining of consciousness and reason.

Psychological empiricism minimised, and ultimately led to a denial, of the very existence of "reflection", that is, of reason. It hence opened the doors to doctrines of determinism and environmentalism. And such doctrines were the rationale for the attack on "freedom and dignity", and for the practice of myriad forms of social engineering and central planning. Within ethical and political philosophy, utilitarian approaches undermined the concepts of natural rights and failed to challenge the morality of altruism (a doctrine significantly named by the arch-collectivist August Comte). In the writings of, for example, the Scottish School, there is a constant emphasis on the ethics of "unselfishness" and duty, a strand of what has been called "civic humanism", a return to the Platonic doctrine that the individual could only express himself fully and ethically by participation in the **polis**. The individual was thus left morally disarmed in the face of moral claims to sacrifice him legitimately for the good of alleged "others", the "race", the "nation", the "state", the "proletariat" or whatever.

A further ambiguity lay within the Enlightenment's concept of science itself. The new mystique of science increasingly manifest itself as "scientism", an attempt to extend the mechanistic and determinist methods and concepts of science to subject matter - the humane sciences - for which it was inappropriate. Scientism thus ignored the distinctive characteristics of the entities to which it was applied, that is, human beings, who possess rational consciousness and free will. Moreover, at a social level, it raised as an ideal the concept of social planning, of the idea that it was "scientific" to attempt to control society as a whole, by means of central planning and social engineering. Although Louis Bredvold's characterisation of the whole tendency of the Enlightenment as a coercive "brave new world" (in his **The Brave New World of the Enlightenment**) (8) was massively overstated, nevertheless, the seeds of truth, the reality of such **tendencies**, were there.

It might be argued that my emphasis on the effect of intellectual error and confusion as the ruling factor in the decline of liberal ideology and hence liberal hegemony is over-stated. I would not deny that other factors of social and economic context also contributed to its decline. However, it seems clear to me that if the doctrine had resolved its inner ambiguities it would

have been in far better shape to face other problems. If the intelligentsia had remained true to liberalism, and if its concepts, assumptions, slogans and so on had continued to permeate society (whether by rational acceptance, by tacit consent, inertia, custom, prestige or whatever), a major engine and transmission belt of the drive to collectivism and the enhancement of state power would have been removed.

In "**The Critical Liberalism of John Mackinnon Robertson, 1856-1933**" I demonstrate, nevertheless, that the sort of systematic, radical and rationalist liberalism of the Scottish School, rooted in historical and class analysis, did continue into the 19th and early 20th centuries. This essay was the first major analysis of the work of Robertson, who is now almost totally forgotten. However, in his time, Robertson was not only a prominent rationalist and free-thought advocate, but a major Liberal Party figure (and junior minister at one point) and an amazingly productive scholar - the author of over a hundred books and monographs (most of them substantial works) and hundreds of essays. In a thorough examination of all his political and sociological writings, I demonstrated that Robertson was directly linked to the historical sociology and class analysis developed by Adam Smith and the Scottish School and by their epigoni such as T. H. Buckle in England and Charles Dunoyer and Charles Comte in France - to all of whom he referred. In a number of major works, most notably **Buckle and His Critics** and **The Evolution of States** (9), Robertson delineated a systematic restatement of liberal historical sociology, a form of "economic interpretation of history" and class analysis that nevertheless did not suffer from the over-simplifications and crudity of the Marxist approaches (which in actuality had stolen, and subsequently distorted, the earlier liberal form of class analysis and economic "determinism" - a point Robertson himself explicitly made). It is true that Robertson's political beliefs are somewhat ambiguous, and have led many readers into confusion over their true nature. He was in many respects torn between the statism of the newer "neo-liberalism" and the radical individualism of earlier, that is, real liberalism. It is probably fair to say that that ambiguity was never fully resolved in his thought, although the later Robertson strikes a more critical note on socialism and statism than the earlier.

I further attempt to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Robertson's scholarship. There is a deep irony insofar as what I see as Robertson's failings in allowing for a greater degree of state interventionism than earlier liberals is implicitly refuted by the analysis contained in his own historical sociology. The "scientistic" leanings to state control and regulation that persisted in his thought should have appeared obviously utopian to him in the light of his analysis of the role of class and special interests in manipulating state power for their own ends. At no point did he make any persuasive case as to why greater democratic participation would render the struggle to utilise state power for sectional and class interest any the less prevalent or overwhelming, or why an abstract "public interest" would prevail in a democratic state. Indeed, it is hard to understand how Robertson could have remained mired in such a naive utopian outlook regarding "social progress" and this area of his thought must be seen as the major failing of his scholarship. He had no illusions about human nature and its combative instincts. How could he possibly believe that universal franchise would prevent all sorts of competing coalitions of special interests from seeking power and profit via the state? His own continued intellectual and political struggle for free trade should have alerted him. Those seeking tariffs were not merely entrepreneurs or holders of capital, but employees and unions. Why should the interests of entrepreneurs, capitalists or employees in other business concern them - let alone the interests of the consumers as a whole? Robertson's failure to apply his own class analysis to such questions only demonstrates that the power of wish fulfilment and political idealism can overwhelm even the mightiest of intellects.

Less successful than Robertson's historical sociology was his economics. On the one hand he rightly adhered to support for free trade, and criticised the attempt to interfere with market relationships and co-ordination. But he seemed to have no basic grasp of the dynamics of markets. His major errors emerged in his espousal of a form of proto-Keynesian under-consumptionism.

I also attempt to link some of Robertson's less developed insights regarding, for example, natural rights and the nature of reason and emotion. Although not elaborated in detail, I argue

that some of his observations have been developed in a more thorough form by contemporary liberals like Karl Popper and Ayn Rand.

My intellectual resurrection of Robertson culminated in my organising a one-day Adam Smith Club Conference on him, at which this paper was read, and which then led to the compilation of its papers, together with other material, in a volume edited by Professor G. A. Wells (10).

In "**The New Enlightenment: The Revival of Libertarian Ideas**", I outline the contemporary revival of libertarian and classical liberal ideas. Although this is not the first or only such attempt to survey the modern liberal revival (see, for example, the works by Henri Lepage, David Green, and Norman Barry amongst others) (11), it is the first to do in explicit comparison with the birth of liberalism in the Enlightenment. The essay also contrasts with most journalistic accounts of the liberal revival, which invariably focus on its economic components. It also criticises the imprecise and misleading application of the term "New Right" to modern liberalism. I demonstrate that many of the contributors to the modern libertarian revival are, inadvertently, dealing with precisely the areas in which the Enlightenment's flaws led to its subsequent decline. Thus, the collapse of the Enlightenment's vision of science into an erroneous "scientism" has been vigorously explored and refuted by the scholarship of Hayek, Karl Popper and Michael Polanyi. Indeed, the philosophy of science, has in their hands, I attempt to show, been transformed into a foundation for concepts of the open society and the free market. Science can progress only in a context open intellectually to bold "conjecture and refutation", whilst the free market constitutes very much the social embodiment of the same process. The scientific vision of a planned, an allegedly "scientific" society, has been refuted as an impossibility. The knowledge necessary to do such planning is simply not accessible to any individual or group of individuals, but can emerge only out of the polycentric processes of market competition. Similarly, I show that the prevailing varieties of determinism and environmentalism that gained hegemony in forms of Freudianism or Behaviourism, have also been challenged by a massive and emergent "humanistic" movement in both psychology and psychotherapy. The reality of the rational and autonomous individual has hence been reaffirmed on far more secure

foundations, in the works of scholars like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, and by more recent psychologists - like Nathaniel Branden and Peter Breggin - who make the link between their psychological theories and their political theories even more explicit.

I also demonstrate how Thomas Kuhn's concept of the successive rise and fall of different "paradigms" can also be fruitfully applied to the rise, fall and revival of classical liberalism. Kuhn demonstrated that science generally progressed spasmodically. A dominant world view, of greater or lesser degree of approximation to the truth, would generally prevail at any one time. Scientific research would then largely take place on the basis of, and within the confines of, that ruling "paradigm". Approaches based on different assumptions would generally be ignored or despised. However, the inadequacies of such a ruling paradigm, **anomalies** it cannot deal with, gradually accumulate and ultimately reach a "crisis point". Only then, with the arrival of a new generation of scientists, will a new paradigm gain general acceptance (12). Kuhn's sociology of science has been applied with varying degrees of success to the history of different disciplines, and although the relativist conclusions he appears to draw from it should be rejected, it is a productive perspective on many areas. It can be applied, as I attempt to do, to the broader hegemony of political ideologies as well. Thus, whilst the Enlightenment liberal paradigm proved unable to deal with various anomalies, flawed alternative views were to gain hegemony - the statist and collectivist paradigm. But the even greater **practical** anomalies that arose as a result of collectivism's intellectual and political sway could not indefinitely be ignored. The manifest collapse of central planning and the perverse and counter-productive effects of virtually all forms of state interventionism and social engineering presented very real, concrete and obvious anomalies that could not be explained in terms of the theory and claims of collectivism. It was thus notable that the "Chicago School" of economics developed its vindication of free market economics from a background of detailed studies of the failure of various forms of interventionism. Moreover, the so-called "public choice" or economics of politics which grew out of the Chicago School approach also added substantially to the class analysis of original liberalism. Whilst that earlier analysis provided clear and valuable **macro** concepts of class, class conflict and exploitation, the Chicago School developed a **micro** analy-

sis that gave us the tools (albeit occasionally unfortunately mired in an excessively mathematical form) to understand the detailed dynamics of bureaucracy, coalition and interest group formation, of "rent seeking", the workings of the political market (eg the concentrated and immediate benefits of special interest seeking versus the dispersed and delayed benefits of the "public interest" as a whole), of the electoral process, the size of nations, and much more. Since my essay was written that scholarship has multiplied enormously.

It has thus been the "crisis period" of statism that has enabled a reformulated libertarianism to emerge - a **New Enlightenment** without the weaknesses of the original Enlightenment.

The modern "libertarian" synthesis, I attempt to show, thus parallels the original Enlightenment vision, indeed, can be seen as an attempt to complete successfully that project on which the original Enlightenment embarked. I also argue that this emergent body of thought constitutes the beginning of that "science of liberty" as conceived by Murray Rothbard.

### **III: Applications - Social Theory and Sociology**

The next related group of essays attempt to **apply** the perspective of systematic Enlightenment liberalism. "**Against the New Mercantilism: The Relevance of Adam Smith**" situates its analysis historically. I attempt to show that Adam Smith's work is far deeper and wider than the classical economics that is now seen as his principal importance and heritage. Whilst a few other writers have made this point in the past, my essay was, when published, one of the first contemporary discussions of the broader significance of Smithian class analysis. The paper demonstrates that Smith's economics were in reality part of a larger and more ambitious form of liberal historical sociology and class analysis, an attempt to explain "the general principles of law and government and the different revolutions they have undergone in different periods of society".



I also attempt to show the continued relevance of Smith's approach as an analysis and critique of our "present establishments". Smith's economic and class analysis were conducted in the context of that system of power and privilege called "Mercantilism". Classic Mercantilism was far more than simply a policy of obtaining a favourable balance of payments based upon a fallacious confusion of gold and silver with real wealth. It involved an increasingly complex policy of state regulation of the entire economy, an attempt to harmonise competing and conflicting economic groups and functions and co-ordinate allegedly chaotic competition. Smith, of course, demonstrated that in spite of its professed noble intentions (or, at least, slogans) the system represented in reality a "wretched spirit of monopoly", and was "prompted always by the private interest of particular traders". I attempt to show that the "present establishments" of our time can largely be characterised as a form of neo-Mercantilism, and that the burden of Smith's critique of 17th century Mercantilism is as relevant and as effective in the context of contemporary neo-Mercantilism or "corporatism". Neo-mercantilism and corporatist doctrines have proved remarkably resilient in both theory and practice. Following the apparent demise of the 1970's versions that I outlined in this essay, they have once again emerged in recent years in the writings of, amongst others, Barry Jones, Simon Reich, Will Hutton, John Gray, Simon Reich, various prophets of the virtues of the alleged success of the "Asian Tigers", and many others (13).

I further demonstrate that a growing body of evidence supports this position. The view that state intervention in the economy grew as a reaction to the depredations of business, in order to serve the public interest by restraining or controlling corporate excess, is a myth that is increasingly being undermined by the findings of many scholars. From the so-called Left, the work of American "New Left" historians (14) has shown that state interventionism in America came about as a result of the efforts of business to restrict an increasingly competitive economy. Apolitical scholars arrived at similar findings, and Chicago School economists and its "public choice/economics of politics" spin-off have also offered a more realistic analysis of how groups compete for power and privilege in the political or non-market realm.

Historically, sociology has largely been associated with and dominated by doctrines that were collectivist in both analytical and normative terms. In more recent years, however, that collectivist predominance has been challenged by a growing number of "radical", "reflexive" and "humanist" schools. In "**Change and Pseudo-Change in Sociology**", I analyse the approaches of two major efforts at alternative sociologies, those of Dennis Wrong and Monica Morris (15). Wrong offers a particularly telling critique of what he terms the "over-socialised" man, the predominant view of human nature within orthodox sociology, a view which minimises human choice and autonomy and is a travesty of reality. Wrong is also particularly valuable in his recognition that many new forms of "symbolic interactionism" are still imbued with a passive "social self" view of man, albeit functioning on a lower level. Monica Morris, in turn, attempts to survey the various forms of phenomenological, ethnomethodological and interactionist strands of thought, all of which call into question positivist methodology and determinist assumptions. She rightly indicates, however, that many of these approaches suffer from pretentious prolixity. Although both writers offer many interesting perspectives which together go a long way in deconstructing the collectivist, holist and determinist assumptions of conventional sociology, neither author offers - I attempt to show - a **really systematic alternative** to that mainstream.

Where that alternative does lie I try to indicate in "**Man, Concepts and Society**". In a discussion of I. C. Jarvie's **Concepts and Society** (16), I attempt to show the importance of the precepts of **methodological individualism**, as outlined by Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, J. W. N. Watkins and Sir Karl Popper. Methodological individualism is the view that social phenomena can be explained only in terms of the individual behaviour and choices of individuals, and that explanations in terms of "social forces", determinism and the requirements of social collectivities are all erroneous. Jarvie endorses this position and argues that society, and especially social change, can be understood only in terms of the beliefs of social actors. Jarvie's work shows the fruitfulness of applying that methodology to such subjects as the role of children and teenagers, the nature of social class and the validity of the sociology of knowledge. His discussion of class is especially valuable and insightful, emphasising that in a free

society social class cannot be understood in terms of readily and objectively identifiable social groups - that it is the theories of class held by individuals, and their consequent behaviour, that explains "class" phenomena. Jarvie's work, alas, as I attempt to show, is not without its faults. It tends to be somewhat disjointed and does not extend the insights of the founders of methodological individualism. Indeed, in some respects Jarvie's exposition of methodological individualism is less exact than those of Von Mises and Hayek. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate the potential that this school of social theory possesses to explain social phenomena.

In "**Freedom, Responsibility and Justice: The Criminology of the 'New Right'**" I describe and evaluate the contributions of contemporary libertarian and conservative approaches in criminology. Those contributions stem from a number of diverse roots, principally: a restatement of natural rights ethics; a rigorous application of the conceptual tools of free market economics; a vindication of elements of traditionalist conservatism regarding punishment; and a critique of the manifest failure of the contemporary legal system and law enforcement. The first offers a clear basis on which actually to define crime. A major consequence for social policy is thus to reject the panoply of "victimless" crimes (drug use, unconventional sex, gambling, drinking, pornography, prostitution etc) as rightful concerns of the law. Resting as it does upon a radical assertion of the reality of free will, and a rejection of determinism, natural rights libertarianism disputes all forms of criminological and sociological excuse-making for criminality. Crime is not a result of poverty. Punishment is also defended as it has traditionally been recognised, as a manifestation of justice. An emphasis upon restitution, the debt owed by the criminal not to "society" but to his actual victim, is also a central feature of libertarian criminology. Free market economists, sharing many of the same assumptions as the libertarian ethical and political thinkers, have also established that criminals are no less rational maximisers than other individuals, and that an unbiased examination of the statistical evidence demonstrates that deterrence through effective law enforcement and punishment, including capital punishment, does work. Traditionalist conservatives in this context also share many of the same assumptions of free will and the importance of justice. Along with libertarians and economists, they also have recognised the perverse consequences of indiscri-

minate welfarism, its demoralisation of its recipients and its contributions to a moral environment of irresponsibility and criminal egotism. And although stemming from a less coherent intellectual position a number of "new realist", empirically oriented scholars have also arrived at similar conclusions.

In spite of elements of diversity in all these approaches, a common theme emerges, as I show. It is a restatement of the relevance of ethics; the importance of free will and individual responsibility; the working of deterrence; and the pivotal role of "pauperisation", of the moral hazards of welfare, in encouraging criminal behaviour. This perspective, misleadingly termed the "New Right" by some, I argue, offers a coherent and convincing alternative to mainstream contemporary criminology, with its disdain for responsibility, punishment, deterrence and liberal concepts of rights.

#### **IV: Applications - History**

The many economic writings of J . K. Galbraith have been subjected to devastating refutation by other economists (albeit with little impact upon his continued fame or popularity). My "**An Economic Misinterpretation of History: A Critique of J. K. Galbraith's Account of American Capitalism**" is the first and only critique of Galbraith's assertions regarding the history of capitalism, specifically that of 19th century America. In **The Age of Uncertainty** (17) Galbraith portrayed the so-called "Gilded Age" of American capitalism as one in which rampant **laissez-faire** led to the despoiling of worker and consumer, and in which the doctrines of "Social Darwinism" were offered by self-consciously guilty and mercenary apologists for such predation as William Graham Sumner. This essay demonstrates that this is a wilful travesty of the truth. Such corruption and predation as did occur, I show, was as a result precisely of the **infringements** of **laissez-faire** that were taking place. Social Darwinist doctrines were not intellectually predominant in the defense of capitalism, and the only real libertarian Social Darwinist, Sumner, was actually a critic of the plutocracy and corruption that did exist.

Galbraith's confusions, I attempt to show, stem from a failure to understand the vital distinction contained in the class analysis of liberalism, as expounded by Smith and as developed by others, including Sumner himself. That analysis distinguishes between the "economic" means to wealth (peaceful production and trade within the market) and the "political" means (interventionism and the use of state power). Ironically, as Sumner had demonstrated, the very interventionism advocated by Galbraith was the real source of whatever corruption existed in his time. Meanwhile, real productive businessmen (like J. J. Hill, Commodore Vanderbilt, Henry Frick, George Westinghouse etc) transformed the American economy with unprecedented technical and marketing innovations. As a result the American economy became the most successful and prosperous in the world - a fact which somehow escapes Galbraith's attention.

## **V: Applications - Political Philosophy**

The next three essays deal with Political Philosophy. In "**The Moral Case For Private Enterprise**" I analyse and advocate the distinctive "rational egoist" or Aristotelian/Natural Rights ethical approach expounded by the modern libertarian thinker Ayn Rand. This essay was the first on Rand's thought to be published in England. In it I attempt to demonstrate that the mainstream of classical liberalism failed to develop a proper moral justification for individual liberty. Repeatedly, when examining the history of classical liberal thinkers we find them conceding the moral high ground to collectivism. As I attempt to show with representative quotations from such thinkers as William Lecky, Henry Sidgwick, and Adam Smith himself, liberalism consistently conceded the altruist premise, that the essence of morality was the submersion of the individual to the good of others or of some collective. I also demonstrate, by representative quotations from Marx, Hitler, the Webbs and Richard Titmus, that it is precisely the morality of altruism - with its rejection of individual rights and of individual happiness as a standard of value - that is the essence of collectivism. By accepting altruism and versions of utilitarianism, Liberalism, I argue, could offer no principled defense against those who wished to sacrifice the individual in the name of varied "higher goods". If sacrifice is the

standard of morality then there will always be those ready to collect, indeed, to enforce, the sacrifice.

I then briefly outline Rand's vigorous development of the sort of eudaemonistic ethics that characterised classical philosophy. In this view morality is a system of values required by human nature to guide its choices. Its standard is the survival of the entity according to its nature. The requirements of human survival and flourishing **qua** human being are those of productive endeavour and trade. Primary morality is thus a self-regarding system ("virtue as self-directed art" or "the practical business of living intelligently", as other Aristotelian scholars have put it). Human rights are those requirements generalised to all human beings - what Spencer called the "law of equal liberty". This position thus rejects the idea that moral action is action primarily dictated by the benefits of others rather than of self, that the individual is morally obliged to submit to the requirements or dictates of others or the alleged requirement of collectivities. It thus offers a fundamental challenge to, and bulwark against, the ethical views that undergird virtually all forms of collectivism and statism.

A perennial form of critique of capitalism and the open society has been in terms of asserting the value of "community". In "**Co-operation Without Community**" I analyse an allegedly libertarian attempt to demonstrate the allegedly "communitarian" aspects of liberalism. I argue that Professor Richard Hiskes' **Community Without Coercion: Getting Along in the Minimal State** is, for a work by a professional philosopher, appallingly confused and wrong-headed. It endlessly elides different senses, some descriptive and some normative, of the word "community" (18). Moreover, Hiskes' work also seems to be an exercise in ethical appeasement. He apparently believes that, in order to justify classical liberalism it must be morally recast as a doctrine of self-sacrifice and the submersion of individual liberty for alleged higher goods or purposes - in other words, that it be rendered into a form of statism and collectivism! In contrast to Hiskes, I attempt to show that social co-operation and the benevolent recognition of mutual rights are characteristics of liberalism and do not necessitate the sort of sacrifice of the individual and his rights that "communitarians" urge. In other words, "co-operation" is

possible without "community" (as the communitarians understand it).

Historically, the creation of constitutions and the idea of enshrining basic freedoms in a fundamental document, have been strongly associated with liberalism. In "**The Case Against a Bill of Rights**", I discuss the role of a written constitution in the preservation of the rule of law. In spite of the traditional emphasis placed upon the letter of constitutionalism by many liberals, especially, but not solely, American ones, I argue that those who emphasise the mechanics of written constitutions or the design of other constitutional mechanism are mistaken. My essay is, to my knowledge, the first specific liberal critique of constitutionalism ever written (although a more conservative critique was subsequently penned by Professor Ken Minogue).

The mistake, I attempt to show, is based on misunderstanding how freedom in society is both attained and maintained. Thus, although one of the freest nations on earth, the United States, was built upon a written constitution, the other, the United Kingdom, was noted precisely for its **unwritten** constitution. My argument rests upon the following basis. Freedom is attained in social life only when the ideas favourable to freedom gain intellectual predominance or hegemony. Freedom cannot be imposed mechanistically, so to speak. It is the product of an evolutionary process. I am not advancing an **exclusively** "intellectual interpretation of history" here. The role of economic interest and of predatory violence (both at an individual level and as exercised through those social agencies we term "government" or the "State") all play their part. Indeed, what is so depressing in the study of human history is precisely the **contingent** nature of human freedom, the fact that it took the remarkable convergence of so many favourable, but **exceptional**, factors to create the "European miracle". Ultimately, however, it is the fundamental ideas and values of a society which dictate its institutional form.

The point about the American Constitution and its Bill of Rights is that these were the manifestation of a long tradition of Anglo-American ideas, ideas which had gained a virtual hegemony in both countries. The views of the 18th Century Commonwealthmen, the Levellers,

John Locke, Natural Law, the Scottish Enlightenment, emerging free market economic theory - these were just some of the myriad forms and varieties of classical liberalism which had permeated society from top to bottom. The American Constitution and the Bill of Rights were simply the triumphal keystone, the manifestation of this ideological power.

Bills of Rights and written constitutions, I argue, thus do not actually maintain freedom. To put it crudely, if the civic order is dominated by liberal mores and ideas then a Bill of Rights isn't necessary. If it is not, then a Bill of Rights will not help you. Constitutionalists basically suffer from a form of social reification. A constitution or Bill of Rights is simply a document. It has no reality except as a piece of paper other than in terms of the ideas and behaviour of individuals. Thus, it was not the paper "checks and balances" of the American Constitution which maintained American freedom, it was the "invisible", but actually more real, ones constituted by the beliefs and behaviours of millions of Americans. Many people at an earlier period of American history went hungry rather than accept state welfare. Others simply would not put up with the sorts of interventionism now accepted as commonplace by contemporary Americans. This is what I mean by the real power of ideas as social forces. It is the power of the social order, of civic society, not scraps of paper, that limited the American state. And it was the same social power that limited the power of the British state in the absence of a written constitution.

I should make it clear that I am not actually **opposing** constitutions **per se**. It could well be argued that, as in the American example, having a clear written description of rights and the powers of government does slow down the slide into statism, or that it becomes easier to see when liberty, in the form of enumerated rights, is being revoked. "Common lawyer" defenders of the "Ancient Constitution" or of the "fundamental law" embodied in the British Constitution have thus always had something of a problem of identifying any **specific** measure as being a major breach of that constitution and of that fundamental law - especially if it has been passed with all the due process and Parliamentary legitimacy that they also hold to be part of the same constitution. A Bill of Rights or written constitution, it might be argued, thus serves as a sort



of thermometer, a scale by which to judge basic infringements of the constitution. To mix our metaphors somewhat, it is a line in the sand the stepping over of which is a clear warning of a threat. However, as current American experience shows, one can never overestimate the degree to which wilful obfuscation of the clear meaning of words can take place once an intellectual climate has changed. Nevertheless, even clever procedural tricks and word-twisting, which might satisfy the wilful ideological false consciousness of its practitioners amongst the political class and the intelligentsia, is less effective with ordinary people. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridge the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances ... A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to bear arms shall not be infringed". Such statements are pretty clear to ordinary people, and as for sophisticated dialectical readings and reinterpretations - well, as George Orwell once put it, there are some things so stupid only an intellectual would believe them.

However, we must return to the point that even before the more recent degradations of the American constitution there had been countless quite blatant infringements of clear constitutional liberties, and assumptions of non-constitutionally mandated powers and functions by the state. Paper barriers to tyranny are no barriers at all in the absence of the beliefs and will necessary to preserve constitutional liberty. We can willingly concede that it is quite conceivable that at some point in the future when libertarian ideas have gained hegemony that the limits to state power might well be listed in some form of document. What would be an error, however, is to believe that that document can itself preserve freedom in the absence of the continued hegemony of those ideas and the continued existence of a civil order that is conducive to liberty.

## VI: Applications - Culture and Literature

Finally, I deal briefly with the cultural dimension and relevance of classical liberalism. In "**Life, Liberty and the Stars: The Ideological Significance of Science Fiction**", I demonstrate why this genre has proved so popular with contemporary libertarians and, indeed, why so many Science Fiction authors are actually libertarians. Albeit fairly brief, my essay is one of the few works attempting to offer a clear definition of the nature of the **genre**, and possibly the only one to place the libertarian impulse at the centre of such a definition.

The defining characteristics of Science Fiction as a **genre**, I argue, are not belletristic ones relating to matters of style, form or symbol, but are, rather, primarily **ideological** ones, a nexus of values and views regarding man and the universe. Science Fiction embodies **metascientific** values relating to the power and desirability of reason and the virtue of enterprise. I use the term **metascientific** deliberately, since Science Fiction is not merely a literary exploration of particular scientific, cosmological or technological ideas, extrapolations of the individual or social effects of particular inventions or social trends (although it can be all these things) but because it embodies what Peter Medawar has called "the new spirit", the intellectual outlook not in itself science, but conducive to science". It embodies the Faustian or Promethean impulse, the spirit of individualism, of self-confident rationality, of bold conjecture and refutation, the assumption of the accessibility of reality to human intelligence and the possibility and desirability of enhancing human existence. Whilst much of "mainstream" literature sank into increasingly trivial realm of the novel of manners, into realist and naturalist doctrines that saw individuals as determined by environmental or other forces, or into frequently irrationalist avant guard "experiments", Science Fiction embodied a sense of life that was rationalist, heroic, individualist and progressive.

My essay also deals with the varied approaches to the problems of human liberty offered by a number of leading Science Fiction authors. Major figures in the genre, such as Robert Heinlein, H. Beam Piper and Poul Anderson, have devoted many works to exploring the dilemmas

of achieving liberty, or asking whether liberty is ever fully or permanently achievable. This literature is far removed from crude propaganda. It constitutes a genuine attempt to embody philosophical and political speculation in literary form, and in some cases comes to quite pessimistic conclusions regarding the prospects for freedom. I also describe what I term "applied science fiction", the activist role in the promotion of liberty, science, technology and space exploration taken by authors and devotees of the genre.

In "**Ernest Hemingway and the Failure of Nihilism**", I attempt to apply what might be termed an ideological approach to the work of a mainstream literary writer, Ernest Hemingway. This is not, needless to say, to offer a crude sort of "socialist realist" type of argumentation that evaluates art merely in terms of its explicit political and ideological content. But nevertheless, there is a truth hidden at the basis of certain Marxist approaches - that values do have some involvement with literary and artistic creation. This insight has been forcefully argued by the contemporary libertarian Ayn Rand (and suggested briefly in one of Nietzsche's observations) and this essay is an attempt to apply her view on the centrality of "sense of life" in artistic and literary analysis.

In an overview of Hemingway's major works I thus attempt to show that the profound nihilism of Hemingway's sense of life limited the possibilities of his **artistic** achievement, in terms of character delineation, strength of symbolism, and intellectual grasp. Hemingway's outlook thus results in characters who become repetitive cliches of stiff-upper lip masculinity; in a repetitive symbolism that seems to leave certain natural features as the only embodiment of value; and in a glaring lack of any mature philosophical content, any serious thought about the themes of his novels.

## VII: Conclusion - The Nature and Prospects of Liberalism

In the space of a generation classical liberalism has moved from being a despised tradition with a minuscule intellectual following - its intellectual obituary being repeatedly read - to a vigorous contender both for intellectual and political hegemony. It would be premature to say that **intellectual** hegemony has been already been attained - the remnants of Marxism and of various forms of collectivism still hold great sway in many disciplines and many academic departments. However, liberalism's greatest competitor is now a strange brew of postmodernism and deconstructionism, doctrines and work so intellectually shoddy and bizarre that it is hard to see them as being sustainable in the long run.

The current revival of classical liberalism as I have outlined it in "**The New Enlightenment**" has continued. The narrow neo-classical economism and positivism that characterised the later liberalism of the 19th and 20th centuries no longer defines contemporary libertarian thought. Its scope is now far broader: social theory, history, psychology, and aesthetics have been added to an economics which itself is far more satisfactory in both methodology and scope (eg public choice theory and the economic analysis of non-market individual and institutional behaviour). The idea that to analyse class, social conflict, or exploitation necessitates recourse to socialist or Marxist concepts is no longer tenable. The long-standing and little or weakly answered moral case against markets and liberalism are increasingly and vigorously being answered. The psychological and scientific errors that have buttressed the case for socialism have been thoroughly demolished. Classical liberalism has been reborn as a vigorous and broad intellectual paradigm. There is, of course, much work to be done. But the outline for future progress is, in my view, clear.

In **practical** terms free market economics have gained hegemony. And although a long retreat of statism is being fought in terms of claims about the necessity of "regulation" or corporatist state/market partnership, the superiority of the market mechanism is now almost universally recognised. The collapse of "Thatcherism" (never in itself a completely liberal phenomenon)

and of the Conservative Party in Britain does not refute this assertion. The Blair tendency in Labour is openly wedded to a predominantly market perspective in economic policy. It is continuing the process of privatisation, and even appears to have recognised (in private) the failure of the NHS and the necessity for its replacement (19). Indeed, in some respects - such as the collapse of the work ethic as a result of indiscriminate welfare and the collapse of standards in the schools - Labour are showing greater signs of awareness of problems and of the necessity for action greater than the previous Conservative Government. They are also drawing upon the "self-help", "mutualist" and co-operative traditions that the early Labour movement shared with classical liberalism and radicalism before socialism proper gained hegemony over it (20).

In political terms, the principal opposition to the free market and to liberalism now comes in two forms. The first is "health fascism", a paternalist project exaggerating the dangers of various habits or foods, and asserting the primacy of imposing health on people for their own good (21). The second, and more serious, is that of environmentalism. However, a movement which is so blatantly reactionary, which in its most extreme forms actually desires the extermination of humanity for the sake of sacred "Gaia", Mother Earth, lacks the long-term appeal of socialism - certainly to ordinary people, rather than small groups of psychotics. Socialism at least claimed to offer a future of abundance and prosperity. A movement which offers no-growth stagnation and austerity at best, and a return to primitive tribalism and ultimate extinction at worst, lacks a certain staying-power (22). Moreover, both health fascism and environmentalism also rely upon "junk science", persistent scientific fraud and legerdemain. Both are thus highly vulnerable to falsification.

I have largely dealt in my essays with explaining the rise of liberalism in terms of internal intellectual causes. But although it is **not** true that "the hand mill will give you a society with a feudal lord, the steam mill a society with the industrial capitalist", as Marx asserted in **The Poverty of Philosophy** (in fact the reverse is true: the prevalence of particular ideas and hence social practices and forms generates the possibility of technological and scientific progress),

there is an ongoing inter-relationship of social context and conditions with intellectual and political thought. It is the complicated reality of such an inter-relationship that gives some credibility to the absurd assertions of Marxist historical materialism, which reduces the reality of human thought and initiative to "phantoms of the mind", the epiphenomena of the "mode of production" (23). None of my comments below should in any way be misconstrued as an endorsement of such a blatantly absurd (yet tragically influential) determinism.

We are, in my view, now in a position to understand properly the nature of the inter-action of social, political and technological forces and their effects upon the prospects for liberty and liberalism. And, significantly, we can do so by employing some of the conceptual tools of liberalism.

Specifically, we can now utilise the economics of politics/public choice analysis of government and an understanding of the "economy of violence". The latter was explored by Frederic C. Lane in his seminal essay "Economic Consequences of Organised Violence" (24). The state, he argued, when not a purely predatory activity, is constrained by its "productive" aspects, its role as a provider of defensive and legal circumstances. Following the Middle Ages, that economy of violence has largely favoured the rise of large centralised states with a heavy investment in the machinery of war. The nature of industrial production, and of the sort of weaponry prevailing up to now, has further led to increasing returns to violence and to its centralisation.

The sort of industrialisation made possible by the free market and its subsequent scientific and technological progress had also increased the returns to violence. The steam mill **did** give one large-scale, centralised, heavy industries. Such industries were, due to their size and centralisation, more vulnerable to coercion and predation both by **private** violence (trade union sit-ins and coercion) and **public** violence (state taxation and regulation).

The current wave of technological innovation constitutes nothing less than a **second** Industrial

Revolution, that already is beginning to affect the returns to violence and the nature of the dispersion of industry itself. New technology, and especially the internet, has already created greater globalisation of capital. Currency transactions and movements can now be effected in the blink of an eye. Moreover, effectively unbreakable encryption available to anyone with a standard personal computer can render those transactions, and all electronic communications, totally secret. The ultimate effect upon the state's ability to regulate or prevent such capital movements, to monitor private communications, political or commercial, and to tax private or corporate income is obvious.

The transition to an "information economy", rather than one based on heavy industry, obviously minimises the centralisation and vulnerability of enterprise to extortion. This will be magnified enormously by the forthcoming revolution in "nanotechnology" - molecular engineering (as outlined by K. Eric Drexler, **Engines of Creation: The Coming Era of Nanotechnology** (25)). Already in experimental development and design, this amazing but unarguably feasible technological revolution will mean that even for firms which still deal with manufactured products, and which benefit from large economies of scale, the production process will be less concentrated. It will be easier to decentralise and far more mobile. They will be able to shift production location with an ease that was never an option for old-style heavy manufacturing. Even a General Motors will no longer be as dependent upon massive, centralised, capital intensive and "heavy" plant. It too will become more of a "virtual" corporation. Any attempt at private or public extortion could lead to activities and assets fleeing the jurisdiction in which the extortion is taking place.

"Cybercommerce", and the predicted and probably inevitable emergence of a private cybercurrency, can only add to the already existing fiscal crisis of the welfare state. The economy of violence will also be affected by the possibility of "cyberwarfare", the vulnerability of military and commercial functions to electronic attack. The means of attack and defence of such systems are further decentralised. Lone individuals will be able to take on states and large corporations - and indeed already have done.

The returns to violence will have thus been drastically reduced. The mobility of capital, production facilities, and intellectual and business talent will drastically limit the ability of the state to exploit them.

Information technology and nano-technology will also have further economic effects. They reduce the natural resources input into production process. They will lower the scale of enterprise as talent and innovation become more important than existing size and market position. They will lower capital costs and barriers to entry. They will reduce the administrative size of the firm and over-all labour force costs. The **internal** transaction costs of firms will also decrease. Individual smaller-scale entrepreneurship will thus flourish once again. There will be a subsequent reduction in the separation of ownership and control and of the managerial "capture" of the firm and its resources.

Although there will be, and already are, attempts to restrict or prevent it, the logic of the new technology is clear and its growth and inevitable effects unstoppable. States which try to restrict such forces will inexorably decline, and those that do not will at least be hosts to economic success. If existing states are to survive in a recognisable form they will have to drastically "downsize" and "marketise" themselves. Unable to milk their inhabitants by taxation, to engage in redistribution or projects of alleged national glory, their only scope will be to practise their role as providers of defence and other possible service functions desired by what are increasingly their **customers**, rather than their **subjects**. Governmental jurisdiction will, for the first time, face effective global competition on the basis of quality and price.

Thus, the old logic of heavy industry and increased returns to violence that favoured high-cost regimes with captive citizenries will have been replaced with a logic favouring hospitality to elusive capital and talent. Those states that do not adapt will eventually wither and die, and the possibility of the evolution of non-state forms of protective agency also cannot be ruled out.

The over-all effects of the emergent Second Industrial Revolution will be the empowering of



the individual (26). It is hard to envisage liberalism, the normative philosophy of individualism and individual liberty, and the analytical "science of liberty", not finding a more supportive and receptive environment in such a world.

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**1: CREATING A SCIENCE OF LIBERTY:  
THE LIFE & HERITAGE OF MURRAY N. ROTHBARD, 1926-1995**

**Contents:**

- I: Economics
- II: Political Theory
- III: History
- IV: A Science of Liberty

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The death of Murray N. Rothbard in January of this year, at the age of 68, came as a shock to me. Since the mid-1960s his intellectual presence in my life (along with that of Ayn Rand and a few other libertarian pioneers) had been constant and central. What **has** Rothbard said about this issue or that? What **would** Rothbard say about this or that? Is he right about this or that? What books, articles, or movies is he recommending? What is he working on now? What political alliances or tactics is he currently urging? These were questions that engaged me, and most of my comrades, for decades. That there could be a world without Rothbard ... well, the possibility never occurred to one.

And now we are in a world without Rothbard, and it is a much poorer one for that. "Rothbard is Right" was a slogan on a badge in the late 60s, specifically supporting one of his **obiter dicta** on the feminist movement. I didn't think he was right (or, at least, entirely right) on that issue, or indeed, on a number of other political, historical, or tactical questions. But on virtually all the **fundamentals**, in the general approach of his work, Rothbard was indeed right.

In economics, methodology, political philosophy, and so on, Rothbard truly established what he used to call the "plumb line" of correct libertarian analysis. To quibble over whether he always hung it perfectly and without error is beside the point, and churlish in an obituary. Even when he was wrong (and there is a touch of **lese majeste** in pronouncing a thinker of Rothbard's stature as wrong), what he wrote was clear, unambiguous, tightly reasoned, and always worth reading. What a contrast with the pretentious verbiage and obscurantisms of most contemporary scholars, of those upon whom academic honoraria and position are lavished!

Rothbard's life was one of ideas and intellectual activism. He received his Ph.D. in Economics from Columbia University in 1956, taught at New York Polytechnic from 1963 to 1985, and from the mid 1980s until his death was Distinguished Professor of Economics at the University of Nevada. He also latterly served as Vice-President of the Ludwig Von Mises Institute at Auburn University. His academic output was prodigious, and not simply confined to the discipline of economics in which he was primarily trained: ethics, political philosophy, history, the social sciences, the history of ideas, cultural and artistic topics were all recipients of his attention.

## **I: Economics**

In economics Rothbard further refined the "praxeological" Austrian School economics of his teacher Ludwig von Mises, developing (in, for example, **Man, Economy and State**) new insights in the theory of capital and interest, competition and monopoly theory, monetary and business theory, and taxation. In **Power and Market**, he extended that analysis even further in a systematic typology and critique of all government intervention in the economy - indeed, of government **per se**.



## **II: Political Theory**

In political theory, in **For a New Liberty** and **The Ethics of Liberty**, Rothbard extended the Aristotelian-Thomistic natural law-natural rights approach (that he shared with Ayn Rand, with whom he was briefly associated in the early 1950s) into a similarly systematic and consistent radical libertarianism. The economic case against the statism and the state was accompanied by an ethical, political, social, and historical critique.

## **III: History**

In history Rothbard wrote a 4 volume history of colonial and revolutionary America, **Conceived in Liberty**. Its central theme was, of course, the never ending struggle between liberty and social co-operation on the one hand and statism and coercion on the other. But the historical perspective was not merely confined to such books or essays on history itself. It informed all of Rothbard's work. One of the grievous failings of modern scholarship, as Professor Stanislav Andreski has pointed out, is a myopic obsession with current scholarship, and a loss of the real discoveries in social studies which have been made. When modern scholarship gets it right, it all too frequently is merely rediscovering what had been learnt before (and usually expressing it less clearly, succinctly, and accurately). One of the joys of Rothbard's work is the constant citation of his great classical liberal and classical economist forebears and their analytical breakthroughs - individuals and analyses that had frequently been consigned to the memory hole by the academic establishment and forgotten even by libertarians.

## **IV: A Science of Liberty**

Rothbard's knowledge of the history of radical and libertarian thought was amazing, and his reclamation of our intellectual heritage helped to correct the many grievous errors into which

the mainstream of classical liberal thought had fallen. Thus, while that mainstream had become dominated by an increasingly rarefied form of value-free economics, Rothbard reunited sound economics with the profoundly radical class, social, and historical analyses that had characterised the work of most of the founding fathers of British and French liberalism. Twentieth century liberalism had fallen into a pattern of overly abstract analysis, a certain lack of engagement with the most pressing and concrete problems of the real world. The "left" had appropriated and distorted class and social analyses that were in origin liberal. What strength and purchase on reality various forms of Marxism and socialism possessed frequently stemmed precisely from that stolen work. Rothbard thus reunited the three strands of original liberalism, - its economics, ethics, and its class and socio-historical analyses - into what classical liberalism/radicalism had originally striven to be: a "science of liberty" that sought both to understand the world and to change it.

Rothbard's historical perspective also led him to examine carefully the reasons for liberalism's decline: reasons that lay not merely in analytical errors but in a failure to think carefully, or even to think at all, about political strategy and tactics. Rothbard wrote and spoke extensively on such matters, and attempted to lead the libertarian movement in line with his favoured tactical and strategic analyses. One's evaluation of the correctness of his analyses - and Rothbard changed his tactics a number of times - can legitimately differ, I believe. I would argue that there was a constant core of validity beneath what appeared as contradictory shifts, but that Rothbard sometimes overstated the mutual exclusivity of particular approaches.

I have heard it said that if Rothbard had not spread his intellectual talents so widely he might have received more established academic recognition, that if he had devoted himself to extending the scope and conceptual understanding of the Austrian School in economics alone he might have earned himself a Nobel Prize. Somehow I doubt it. Although some of the Chicagoites have ascended to such honours, the more deep and extensive departure from positivist orthodoxies inherent in the Austrian approach is too strong a meat for the table of most contemporary academics. And anyone with experience of academic life knows that Rothbard's

give-no-quarter, wholehearted commitment to justice and liberty also upsets too many academic applecarts and cosy intellectual cartels. We have also yet to see the Nobel Committee rushing to bestow their honours upon say, a gifted Austrian specialist like Israel Kirzner, or upon a specialist libertarian philosopher like Tibor Machan. The parade of lacklustre and intellectual mediocrities upon whom laureates are generally bestowed is still a worthy equivalent to that of the "ex"-terrorists and present despots who receive the "Peace" Prize.

Such comments also ignore the true intellectual significance of Rothbard. Certainly, he could have distinguished himself as an ultra-specialist within one discipline, but consider the limits of such specialisation. The bane of contemporary social sciences (and arguably the physical ones too) is the lack of unifying principles. The common view that modern specialisation or the "difficulty" of various sciences makes it impossible to be a "Renaissance Man", an able generalist with a grasp of the whole world of knowledge is, I believe, wrong. Fundamental principles of human nature and scientific methodology make a coherent understanding of all the social sciences accessible. Truly scientific principles are currently swamped by the contemporary obsession with publish-or-perish specialisation and intellectual fragmentation. It doesn't have to be that way and it should not be. Basing his scholarship upon an Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical foundation meant for Rothbard, and rightly so, that the science of liberty was not at root divorced from science as a whole. The philosophy of man, including the normative values that derive from our natures, is as much part of true knowledge as any laws of physics or chemistry. The errors of "scientism", the mistaken understanding of the nature of science, are in Rothbard's work swept aside. True knowledge, as an integrated, hierarchical whole - the goal aimed at (and often closely approached) by many of the great but neglected Thomists - was once more put at the centre of the intellectual agenda by Rothbard.

The "Rothbardian system" was not completed by Rothbard. Alas, his history of economic thought only reached up to Smith (albeit in two volumes!). His history of America reached only the revolutionary period (in 4 volumes!). Sorely missed is the study of the pivotally important Progressive period in America, upon which he was working. One wishes too that he

had written extended treatments of his insights into the philosophy and methodology of history and the social sciences, and on the history of sociological thought. But the key foundation stones and much of the structure of the Rothbardian system is there. How many others could boast of such an achievement?

I have said little about Rothbard the man. My own contacts with him, whether in agreement or disagreement, were fairly few and far between. It must be left to others to testify to his dauntless wit, his wide-ranging and jovial friendships across the political spectrum, his political manoeuvres and rivalries. But at the end of the day what is important is Rothbard the **thinker**, the intellectual heritage which will educate and inspire for countless generations. The grand system, the vision of a science of liberty based on praxeological economics, methodological individualism, class analysis, and natural law ethics, will be completed by others. That work is even now continuing, at the Von Mises Institute, in **The Journal of Austrian Economics**, and in the ongoing scholarship of numerous individuals at other institutions or working independently. If humanity is to have any sort of decent future, perhaps even a future at all, it will be because Murray Rothbard's vision of liberty and justice for all will have triumphed.

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## 2: THE REVOLUTION OF REASON: PETER GAY, THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE AMBIGUITIES OF CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

"The time will come, then, when the sun will shine  
only on free men on this earth, on men who will recognize  
no master but their reason." Condorcet

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### Contents:

I:	A Rationalist Interpretation of History
II:	Liberty and Capitalism
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V:	Psychology and Reason
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VII:	Science and Scientism
VIII:	The Ambiguities of the Enlightenment
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In his seminal essay "Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty" (1), Professor Murray Rothbard delineated a libertarian interpretation of history, an interpretation which saw the larger part of humanity's existence on earth before the 18th Century as dominated by a distinctive

"Old Order". Whether in the form of the primitive tribe, Oriental despotism or feudalism, the Old Order was a "society of status" distinguished by tyranny, fixed class or caste, exploitation, stagnation and hopelessness. It is indeed significant, as we shall see, that this interpretation is at once both a libertarian, and, as Karl Popper has put it, a **rationalistic** one. For Rothbard and Popper alike, the dismal record of human history is interrupted by but a few enthralling periods distinguished by (in Popper's words) "the efforts of men to free themselves, to break out of the cage of the closed society, and to form an open society." (2) Undoubtedly the three most important landmarks on the as yet uncompleted journey to an "open society" were those of Graeco-Roman civilization, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment. But it was this last period, the Enlightenment of the 18th Century, which provided the most revolutionary fulfilment of what had been in its predecessors at best only a tenuous promise. As the eminent French historian Paul Hazard put it, it was in the period from 1715 that "there became apparent an effervescence and a diffusion of ideas so remarkable in its nature, so far-reaching in its extent as to be without parallel in history." (3) In essence, it was the age of the Enlightenment that witnessed the creation of a self-conscious and revolutionary radicalism and a new vision of human potentialities, and the possibility of their **liberation**.

Professor Peter Gay's monumental two volume study, **The Enlightenment: An Interpretation** (4) is a work of major importance, and it is a most regrettable fact that it has failed to receive much attention in libertarian circles. For the creation of a sophisticated historical understanding is a vitally important--but all too frequently neglected--part of libertarian analysis, and Gay's work constitutes an outstanding contribution to the development of such understanding. In fact, **The Enlightenment** is a most refreshing work of scholarship: in a period of increasingly myopic specialization Gay, while undoubtedly in full control of all his materials (a fact attested to by his earlier books and essays and by the extensive and dazzling bibliographic essays at the end of each volume of this work) does not fail to complete the task of scholarship, that of criticism and synthesis in the cause of the grand theme. But what renders Gay's work all the more attractive to the contemporary libertarian is the author's own quite explicit sympathy with his subject, with what he describes as "the permanent value of the Enlightenment's humane and

liberal vision ... the permanent validity of its critical method." (5) Moreover, Gay's own conception of his intellectual task is a threefold one, "to account not merely for the **philosophes'** ideas and for the interplay of these ideas but also to judge the adequacy or inadequacy of their perceptions," (6) leads him to take an unabashed evaluative and critical stance **vis-a-vis** his subject. It is, then, in subject, substance and approach that **The Enlightenment** possesses a direct relevance and importance so often lacking in more orthodox works of intellectual history.(7)

### **I: A Rationalist Interpretation of History**

In tracing the genesis of the Enlightenment and its vision of the past, the first volume of Gay's study, entitled **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, essentially constitutes a powerful documentation of the "rationalist interpretation of history." For Gay, as for the **philosophes**, Greek civilization was a true revolution in the intellectual history of mankind, a "discovery of the mind," a period which "liberated men from the tyranny of myth and breathed the bracing air of reason." (8) It was not a revolution at one blow, of course, but rather "a long, laborious conquest of myth by reason" which took place, but it was a revolution nonetheless. Gay draws on the work of a number of scholars, including F. M. Cornford, Jane Harrison, Bruno Snell and Henri Frankfort in support of his thesis. But it is Ernst Cassirer's distinction between two basic patterns of thought, between an essentially pathological "mythopoeic" mentality and rational intelligence, of which he makes the most fruitful use. (9) And it was undoubtedly to Greece that we are indebted for the revolutionary creation of a sustained critical intelligence which cut through the "web of myth" that had for so long constrained humanity.

For the **philosophes** of the Enlightenment the decline of Graeco-Roman civilization and the rise of Christianity constituted a terrible tragedy: the Middle Ages were for them truly Dark Ages, when the power of reason was once more subject to superstition and overwhelming religious and political tyranny. The Enlightenment view of the Middle Ages has, of course,

been subject to massive criticism, and it is indeed necessary, as Gay points out, to recognize "the beauty, the learning, and the variety of the Christian millennium" (10), to observe that it was "not merely an abyss ... but a transmission belt." (11) In reality, the **philosophes** were themselves often constrained to make such qualifications. But, as Gay states, their polemics were very much to a purpose: "they treated the past ideologically because they were engaged in an ideological battle that knew no quarter. The Christian millennium ... was part of their political present." (12) Moreover, the **philosophes** were fundamentally correct in their view of the Middle Ages; it was a qualitatively different period. As Gay puts it: "behind a tissue of erroneous detail and prejudiced judgment stands a major historical truth, a truth that remains valid and becomes more obvious after its animus has been stripped away and its emotional terminology replaced by neutral language -- the Middle Ages were different in vital essence from the ages that preceded and followed them. And they were different, above all, because they introduced -- or rather, reinstated -- religious myth as the deepest motive power and final purpose of civilization." (13)

Nevertheless, the seeds of a new society -- "seeds of reason" -- remained within the womb of the old. For Gay it is the four centuries between 1300 and 1700 that constitute the "prehistory of the Enlightenment", a period "when the critical mind resumed its interrupted conversation with classical antiquity and moved towards independence." (14) These were the years in which the unity of Christian civilization was increasingly undermined by forces of secularism and rationalism and, indeed, by its own spiritual malaise and lack of self-confidence. If not yet modern, it was an age no longer strictly mediaeval, an age aptly characterized by Gay as the "era of pagan Christianity" when the new forces and spirit were still subsumed under or controlled by the old. The burgeoning of the Renaissance testified, however, to the vigour of the new spirit, to the new sense of man as "free, the master of his fortune, not chained to his place in a universal hierarchy but capable of all things." (15) But while the Renaissance possessed the same general qualities as the Enlightenment, manifesting most of the same intellectual themes and tensions, it resolved them in a different manner. Rather than a revolution, the Renaissance represented a victory for moderation and "compromise". As Gay puts it: "The



central intellectual problem of the Renaissance was to find ... a compromise formula ... that would enable men to live comfortably with classical forms and Christian convictions, trust in man and trust in God, vigorous secular energies and a tenacious ascetic ideal." (16)

It was, then, to the Enlightenment that was left the task -- the honour -- of finally breaking out of the "holy circle" (as Gay terms it) and of completing what we might call "the revolution of reason." The "recovery of nerve" manifest in the Renaissance reached its culmination in the sense of life of the Enlightenment, in an ethos in which the possibility of massive social protest no longer wore a mantle of unrealistic utopianism. And this revolution in attitude, as Gay makes clear, was precisely the product and accompaniment of the growing predominance of reason, of critical intelligence, and its fruits in science and medicine. What Gay's work so effectively and valuably underlines is the inextricable linkage of the two basic values of the Enlightenment, between "the supremacy of philosophy and the autonomy of man." For the revolution of reason was simultaneously and of necessity the revolution of **liberty**. The autonomy of the individual rests only upon the supremacy and exercise of a militant rationalism which blasts aside the pretensions of illegitimate authority and the mystique of the status quo. The revolutionary significance of an unbridled rationalism was indicated most vividly by Diderot's ideal of the philosopher who "tramples underfoot prejudices, tradition, antiquity, universal assent, authority, in a word, everything that overawes the mass of minds, who dares to think for himself, to go back to the clearest general principles, examine them, discuss them, admit nothing save on the testimony of his experience and his reasoning." (17)

## **II: Liberty and Capitalism**

The political temper and tendency of the Enlightenment was, then, fundamentally libertarian. Its politics was essentially a politics of liberty -- a "politics of decency" as Gay sympathetically puts it -- which launched a growing attack upon a hierarchical class society, upon slavery and serfdom, upon clerical despotism and upon the barbarity of the criminal law, in favour of a

free and humane society open to talent and merit. As Gay states:

"The men of the Enlightenment united on a vastly ambitious programme, a programme of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom, above all, freedom in its many forms --freedom from arbitrary power, freedom of speech, freedom of trade, freedom to realise one's talents, freedom of aesthetic response, freedom, in a word, of moral man to make his own way in the world." (18)

Moreover, while hardly a radical libertarian, and frequently manifesting many of the orthodox myths and attitudes (he is, for example, quite capable of speaking about "the bourgeois spirit, which would merely rationalize the cowardice, the greed, and the philistinism typical of the trading mind"!) (19), Gay makes it thoroughly clear that **economic freedom**, the ideal of the free market and **laissez-faire**, was a vital and basic part of the Enlightenment's radicalism. He speaks of Adam Smith's **The Wealth of Nations** as a "cardinal document of the Enlightenment" (20) and declares that,

"(F)undamental values -- Enlightenment values --were involved in the issue of economic freedom, most notably man's right to determine his own fate, his right to be treated not as a ward of a supremely wise government but as an autonomous being." (21)

In fact, Gay's -- alas too brief -- comments regarding the origins of capitalism are remarkably incisive and of some note in an historical area crying out for libertarian revision. Indeed, his remarks lend support to the thesis of Professor Rothbard in his essay "Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty". They implicitly help refute the view (originated, as Rothbard pointed out, by the late 19th Century German anti-liberal historians) that the growth of the absolute monarchies and of mercantilism was a historically progressive stage necessary for the liberation of the merchants and masses from local feudal restrictions. (22) Rather, Gay helps show

that the genesis of market capitalism was essentially an interstitial one, a development that flourished precisely where coercive authority was exercised less, whether that authority be of feudal lord and guild or royal absolutism and mercantilism. In Gay's words:

"The dynamism that is the capitalist spirit was ... the property of a minority and to an impressive extent of outsiders. In England, the industrial revolution was almost proverbially in the hands of Protestant Dissenters and Scots in search of their fortune. In France, financial and industrial innovations were largely the work of foreign Protestants -- Scots and Genevans -- and Huguenot families who had survived the great purges of the 1680s. Prussia benefited immensely from those purges: the Great Elector intelligently invited Huguenot refugees into his domains, and acquired able administrators and inventive craftsmen. The great port city of Hamburg, one of the many Free Cities in the German Empire, avoided the decay of most of the others by welcoming foreigners of all nationalities and giving them a share in civic and commercial affairs. The Hamburg Constitution of 1712, perhaps the least oligarchical urban charter of the age, reflected this liberal spirit and protected it. And in many European cities the Jews and Lombards did the financial business that the new spirit demanded and the old religion condemned." (23)

### **III: The Reversal of the Enlightenment**

However, as incisive and valuable as Gay's study is, it unfortunately falls short of perfection in one very important respect. Perhaps it is due to the fact that the author is not himself a radical libertarian, but a relevant and central question regarding his subject is notable mainly by its

absence: i.e. what became of the Enlightenment's "humane and libertarian vision"? What happened to a seemingly overwhelming intellectual and political movement toward "natural liberty."? That Gay fails to explore this issue is all the more strange since his own principal intellectual mentor, Ernst Cassirer, had himself voiced such questions:

"How was it that all these great achievements (i.e., of the Enlightenment) were suddenly called into question -- that the nineteenth century began with attacking and openly defying all the philosophical and political ideals of the former generation?

(What lay behind) the complete and rapid change of ideas that we meet in the first decades of the nineteenth century?" (24)

The major part of the answer to such questions can be found, I believe, **within** the Enlightenment itself. As Paul Hazard wrote regarding the "disaggregation" of the Enlightenment:

"(W)ithin those symmetrical designs (i.e., of Enlightenment philosophy) ... there were hidden certain inconsistencies, certain contradictory elements, which ultimately rendered them nugatory, at least in part ... we shall see a doctrine brought to nought, not by any hostile intervention from without, but by the operation of some inherent defect from within. We shall see how flaws remained undetected within a system that was so seemingly faultless; we shall see how a victory, prematurely proclaimed, turned out to be no victory at all, and how, yet once again, a mighty effort to bring happiness to mankind was doomed to end in failure." (25)

In other words, it was the very flaws and ambiguities within the Enlightenment's own philosophy to which we can trace the causes its dissolution and the failure of its libertarian promise.

In all fairness to Professor Gay he does **partially** recognise this. He is quite well aware, of course, that "(t)he world has not turned out the way the **philosophes** wished and half expected it would." (26) And he does portray those ambiguities which were to prove so fatal -- but **implicitly**. What he fails to do, unfortunately, is to draw out **explicitly** the full significance, the political and ideological significance, of those philosophical ambiguities.

What, then, were those fatal ambiguities to which we refer? Drawing especially from the second volume of Gay's work, **The Science of Freedom**, we can, I think, distinguish four major areas of concern:

- (i) the status of reason and the reason-emotion relationship
- (ii) the nature of human psychology
- (iii) the status of "natural law"
- (iv) the significance and implications of science.

#### **IV: The Nature of Reason**

Although the Enlightenment was eventually to be subject to especially vehement attack for its allegedly "cold and heartless" rationalism it was, ironically, precisely the status of reason and its relationship to the emotions that constituted a serious ambiguity central to most Enlightenment thinkers. For although committed to rationalism and to philosophy as "the organized habit of criticism", the Enlightenment also stressed a certain "philosophic modesty". In their reaction against the abstractions and dogmatisms of both mediaeval and 17th Century philosophy and theology -- against what David Hume termed "an abstruse philosophy which seems to have hitherto served only as a shelter to superstition, and a cover to absurdity and error"(27) -- the **philosophes** were uncertain as to the nature and ultimate province of reason. As Gay states: "(T)he limits of rational inquiry into ultimate mysteries, the impotence of reason before the passions, were ... themes that haunted the Enlightenment." (28) Indeed, he is even able to

label this aspect of their thought as a "revolt against reason." Moreover, this uncertainty as to the power and province of reason combined with another fatal ambiguity. For the rehabilitation and celebration of man as a natural creature was a rehabilitation of the "whole" man, of the passions as well as of reason, of man as a sensual and emotional being. And to a certain degree this was all well and good; as Gay states, "the Enlightenment's rehabilitation of the passions was essential to its rehabilitation of man as a natural creature." (29) But the **philosophes** were unable to successfully resolve the false dichotomy between reason and emotion, and in fact widened it by their vague and dangerous encomiums to the passions. The "emotional" nature of man, the limits -- both philosophical and psychological -- of individual reason, was a central message of Enlightenment thought. Hume's statement that "(r)reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions ..." was merely one of its most famous manifestations. And thus the Enlightenment had left the path fatefully unobstructed for the progress of those myriad doctrines proclaiming the primacy, psychological, political and moral, of the "passions", for movements seeking the fulfilment of the alleged emotional needs of man, for countless irrationalist theories and cults; in a word, for the statist collectivisms of both "left" and "right".

## **V: Psychology and Reason**

A similar ambiguity in Enlightenment philosophy arose in the area of its dominant psychological concepts, i.e. because of its Lockean "sensationalism" and "associationism." For although the motivation and predominant interpretation of the Lockean approach was undoubtedly libertarian -- i.e., in its undermining of "original sin" and the mystique of the status quo, and establishment of the possibility of rational and radical social improvements (30) -- its potential implications were sinister indeed. The whole tendency of empirical psychology following Locke was the minimising, ultimately the complete denial, of the significance -- the very **existence** of "reflection", i.e. of reason. In modern terminology, its vision of man was essentially deterministic and behaviouristic, and the implications of such a vision are, as its more radical and frank exponents were eventually to declare, to render "freedom and dignity" quite

meaningless. The logic of determinism and environmentalism is most definitely not the logic of liberty, but that of "social planning", "social control", "social engineering" and other such similar formulas for tyranny.

## **VI: Natural Law and Natural Rights**

But possibly the most immediately striking ambiguity -- certainly the most immediately politically significant -- within Enlightenment thought was the tension between the tradition of natural law-natural rights philosophy and that of utilitarianism. And that tension was one resolved increasingly in favour of utilitarianism. As Gay puts it: "As the century went on, the **philosophes'** attitude toward natural law became more and more sceptical, their relation to it more and more tenuous ..." (31). The significance of this change in attitude indeed held the most serious implications for the Enlightenment's "humane and libertarian vision", for the point is, as Elie Halevy made clear in his classic study of philosophic radicalism, that "(t)he philosophy of utility is not essentially a liberal philosophy -- not, in origin and in essence, a philosophy of liberty". (32) The real nature of utilitarianism was not immediately apparent during the Enlightenment because its exponents and those of a natural rights based liberalism shared many of the same assumptions regarding man and society, assumptions largely libertarian in orientation and result. (33) But once those assumptions changed, then the logical direction of utilitarianism could be seen clearly for what it was, and that was most definitely **not** a libertarian one. The example of Jeremy Bentham in this respect is particularly illuminating, and although he stands largely outside the main period of concern even Professor Gay is constrained to comment parenthetically upon him. For Bentham's obsessive fascination with his "Panopticon" model prison scheme, a vision of absolute "efficiency" and authoritarian control, illustrates very well the internal logic of the utilitarian position and its hold on the mind of a certain type of intellectual. Gay's dismissal of this authoritarian, manipulative element in Bentham's thought as an "eccentricity" (34) simply will not do. It should certainly be considered in the context of the other themes in his work, countervailing themes more libertarian and individual-

ist in essence, but it remained nonetheless a very real and powerful element. (35) And Bentham's significance in the context of this issue should not be underestimated; Gay is surely right in his description of him as "the arch-philosophe, who took eighteenth-century radical ideas into the nineteenth." (36)

The Enlightenment's ambiguity relating to natural law is rendered all the more striking, however, when we realise that it was David Hume who delivered the real, the philosophical and epistemological, deathblows to the doctrine. For Hume, in Gay's view, represented "the complete modern pagan", and almost archetypal embodiment of the Enlightenment ethos and dialectic: "in his intellectual pedigree, in his intentions, and in his very world view, Hume belongs with the **philosophes**, no matter how amiable his disposition, individual his argumentation, and unexpected his conclusions". (37) Yet Gay is also compelled to recognize that in its attack on "mere philosophic fictions" Hume's thought marks an epoch in the internal history of the Enlightenment." (38) If reason constituted the basis of the Enlightenment's radicalism and libertarianism, Hume's denial of necessity in causal relations, his denial of any rational basis to moral judgments, and his declaration of the impotence of reason before the passions, clearly represented a major challenge to that libertarianism. Whatever the complexity of motivation and intellectual orientation in Hume's case, a more penetrating assessment of his historical significance is surely that of Sheldon S. Wolin, who declared that "Hume was something more than the Enlightenment incarnate, for his significance is that he turned against the Enlightenment its own weapons ... (whittling) down the claims of reason by the use of rational analysis." (39)

At this point it should be stressed that Gay is correct in emphasising the "humane and liberal vision" as fundamental to the Enlightenment. The attempt by such scholars as J. L. Talmon and Louis Bredvold (40), to portray the **philosophes** simply as proto-totalitarians can only be supported by a highly selective and one-sided reading of their work. However, the point is that totalitarian potentialities were **implicit** in the Enlightenment, within the sort of philosophic ambiguities we have discussed. And Bredvold, in his **The Brave New World of the Enlight-**



enment, is certainly correct in his view of the ominous implications of the abandonment of natural law. It is, then, precisely in such ambiguity -- as much as in its positive intellectual virtues -- that the significance of the Enlightenment lies.

## VII: Science and Scientism

Not as immediately important as the abandonment of natural law and the rise of utilitarianism, but undoubtedly as **ultimately** significant, was a further ambiguity arising from the question of the status and implications of Science. As Gay notes, Science became in the enlightenment a "new mystique", with the figure of Newton being virtually deified (41). But in their quite understandable and thoroughly humanistic enthusiasm for the mastery over nature -- the liberation -- promised, and increasingly achieved, by Science, the **philosophes** drew conclusions that resulted eventually in unhumanistic -- and inhumane -- developments. As Gay puts it:

"The momentous manifestation of the scientific method -- one of the most significant, most heartening realities in the world of the Enlightenment -- promised a momentous consequence. If the scientific method was the sole reliable method for gaining knowledge in a wide variety of contexts, from the phenomena of the heavens to the phenomena of plant life, it seemed plausible and in fact likely that it could be profitably exported to other areas of intense human concern where knowledge was as primitive now, and disagreement as vehement, as it had been in physics a century before -- the study of man and society." (42)

But as he further states:

"The Enlightenment's entanglement with science is pervaded with ironies

... the **philosophes'** seizure of science was a far from untroubled affair ... (confronting them) with linguistic, ethical and metaphysical difficulties they had not anticipated, and for which most of them were ill-prepared." (43)

Unfortunately, however, Professor Gay hardly broaches the full irony, the real ambiguity, of the Enlightenment's vision of science, and why it held such ominous implications. This consists of the fact that it was the methodology of the **physical** sciences that was to be applied to the study of man and society. Thus there was born that phenomenon we now refer to as "scientism", a development perhaps most thoroughly analysed by Friedrich Hayek in **The Counter-Revolution of Science** (44). In scientism we confront a profoundly **unscientific**, uncritical attempt to transfer the methodology of one scientific discipline to another, ignoring the crucial and distinctive attributes of their respective subjects -- in the case of the study of man, his rational consciousness. Thus, the dominance of scientism has produced "social sciences" characterized by their militant denial of the validity of introspection, by reductionism and determinism, and by methodological collectivism, holism, and historicism. Of course, in the work of the most scientifically inclined of the **philosophes** -- d'Alembert, Turgot, Lagrange, and Condorcet -- the full implications of this development were hardly grasped or acted upon. As Hayek observes, they still embraced, both in theory and practice, not insignificant elements of the "abstract and theoretical method" and indeed remained "staunch individualists." But nevertheless, as Hayek also concludes, "in some respects most of these men unwittingly started trains of thought which produced views on social matters very different from their own." (45) The ethos of science and rationality, of control over nature, was also transformed by other figures into a "scientific" vision of "humanity determining itself", and other rhetorical formulas which glossed over the fact that this could only mean in practice **some** men "determining" **others**. Thus, in the "social physics" of Saint-Simon and August Comte, and in the later classic sociology of Durkheim and Mannheim, scientism emerged fully in its true colours -- i.e., as a thoroughly anti-individualist, anti-libertarian, and authoritarian movement, a **counter-revolution** in every sense of the term. Once more, then, the Enlighten-

ment's heritage was an ambiguous one. If Gay can pay tribute to its "humane and liberal vision", then such contemporary advocates of totalitarian social engineering as Ernest Becker (46) are, alas, equally well justified in tracing to the Enlightenment's search for a "science of man" the roots of their own nefarious and despotic vision.

### **VIII: The Ambiguities of the Enlightenment**

It is, then, a failure to draw out the full significance -- the political and ideological significance -- of the ambiguities within Enlightenment philosophy that constitutes the major failing of the otherwise so masterly achievement of Peter Gay's **The Enlightenment: An Interpretation**. Not that he is entirely unaware of such ambiguities, or fails to deal with any of the political aspects of the Enlightenment, of course. He does state, for example, that "politics presented the Enlightenment with a dilemma of heroic proportions" (47). The issue of whether coercion and manipulation by a paternal and enlightened elite was justifiable for the attainment of Enlightenment ends was, Gay indicates, a major issue, and one rendered all the more central by the generally environmentalist viewpoint of the **philosophes** (48). The anti-libertarian implications of such environmentalism were in fact seen, as Gay recounts, by Diderot, who criticised the ominously authoritarian direction in which Helvetius' extreme environmentalism had led him. (49) Yet such points cry out for elaboration, an elaboration they alas fail to receive. Consider the final chapter of the second volume, dealing with Rousseau. What an opportunity, in analysing this paradoxical figure, to sum up all the ambiguity of the Enlightenment and its political meaning. For Rousseau, as Gay does indeed state, while "not wholly in the Enlightenment ... was of it". He was, in Gay's view, at one and the same time "a libertarian who could not get compulsion out of his mind" (51). He so blatantly manifests, too, that pathological psychological characteristic we so frequently find at the roots of statist-collectivist movements, that "urgent, sometimes frantic longing for community" (52). In all these things Rousseau gave an unmistakable indication as to the course of future history. And in his typically "dialectical" concept of "the general will", an attempt to offer a solution to "the

dilemma between freedom and reform that beset the [other **philosophes**] (53), the path of much future political thought and development could clearly be seen. Professor Gay rightly recognizes that Rousseau was thus more "modern" than his fellow **philosophes** and that his thought was distinguished by its "anticipation of future problems" (54). But that Rousseau's solutions "presented glimpses of a future not wholly palatable" (55) is surely an understatement. In both motivation and thought Rousseau clearly stands, as Crane Brinton has stated, as "one of the prophets of modern collectivist society" (56).

Although one recognizes that any study of so broad a scope as Professor Gay's is subject to obvious limitations of space, his failure to pursue such important and significant insights beyond a few token sentences or comments is striking -- all the more so in comparison with, say, his extremely detailed treatment of such a topic as the aesthetic thought of the Enlightenment.

In **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, the first volume of his study, Gay had seen a major part of his scholarly task as that of judging the "adequacy or inadequacy" of the Enlightenment's **historical** vision of itself -- i.e. of its significance and place in history. What I find so grievously lacking (and, as a radical libertarian, so important) in **The Science of Freedom**, the second volume, is any similar evaluation of the Enlightenment's philosophic-political vision of itself, of the significance and status of its political liberalism and its "science of freedom." In fact, what becomes unmistakable after any serious study of the Classical Liberal tradition is just how ambiguous, how restricted, and how fatally flawed in its libertarianism it was. Its departures from individualist premises, in both normative and analytic respects, were far from infrequent. Thus, we find Adam Smith declaring, in **The Theory of Moral Sentiments**, that "Man was made ... to promote ... the happiness of all" (57). As one Smith scholar has concluded: "It was not to serve the selfish benefit of the individual that he should be given his head ... the belief that Smith was primarily an individualist ... is the very reverse of the truth. For him ... the interests of society were the end" (58). Similarly, his very view of the individual was as a highly "social" creature, moulded by his social relationships and extremely

vulnerable to the alleged horrors of isolation and loneliness. It was indeed an extremely "oversocialized conception of man" (to use the phrase of Dennis Wrong) to which Smith adhered (59), and, as Gladys Bryson has written, "in (the) discussions of Smith's ... which prefigure so much of modern social psychology, there sometimes seem to be no individuals at all, so organic is the relation of person to person conceived to be" (60). These characteristics were shared by the whole of the "Scottish School" of which Smith was a member -- by Hume, Adam Ferguson, Francis Hutcheson, John Millar, Dugald Stewart, the major thinkers who established not merely foundations of political liberalism but much of the basic conceptual framework of modern thought, the intellectual channels in which thought has run since their time. And for the Scottish School, as A. L. Macfie has written, "the ultimate unit is society, and moral obligations consist just in the individual's duty to society, where there is conflict with the claims of 'self-love'" (61). In the work of Adam Ferguson, for example -- which was, significantly, an influence upon Marx -- we find an often extreme hostility to individualism and "selfishness", a view of the individual as overwhelmingly socially conditioned, and an early version of the wrongheaded and harmful "alienationist" thesis (62).

The same sort of fatal ambiguities and flaws were also present in Classical Economics as a whole. Much of the "communitarian" and nationalistic outlook at the Mercantilists was to remain in the Classical approach. "It was," Professor Lionel Robbins points out in his important study **The Theory of Economic Policy in English Classical Political Economy**, "the consumption of the **national economy** which they [the Classical Economists] regarded as the end of economic activity" (63). And regarding the concept of **laissez-faire** it should also be noted that **none** of the Classical Economists ever adopted it as a consistent policy prescription. At best it was only conceived of as a vague tendency within the boundaries of legitimate national sovereignty. Any government intervention in the economy, any restriction of "natural liberty", was to be judged on its individual "merits", not against any standard of natural rights.(64) Moreover, serious technical ambiguities and failings drastically undercut the Classical analysis of the market. Smith's view of the division of labour (like Ferguson's) left the way clear, even encouraged, the later development of alienationist doctrines. More importantly, how-

ever, the Classical labour theory of value provided the foundation for very different conclusions which were to be drawn by Marx and other socialists -- and even led astray many individualists in their view of profit, interest and rent. In all, then, as Lionel Robbins concluded, "The Classical analysis abounds in pessimistic vistas and revelations of clashes of interest" (65).

One could elaborate at much further length, but the point should be clear (66). Liberalism, from Smith and the Scottish School, through Classical Economics, Bentham and the Utilitarians, to Mill, Spencer and up to the present day has been completely undermined by its own fatal intellectual ambiguities and flaws. It failed to complete the Enlightenment's revolution of reason, to provide a complete and consistent vindication of human liberty. Instead, its conservative and collectivist elements overwhelmed its liberal and individualist ones. As Sheldon S. Wolin has concluded in an important and penetrating re-assessment of the liberal tradition:

"Liberalism has always been accused of seeking to dissolve the solidarities of social ties and relationships and to replace them by the unfettered, independent individual, the masterless man. In reality, the charge is almost without foundation and completely misses the liberal addiction towards social conformity." (67)

Professor Gay's failure to deal with the ultimate political significance of the Enlightenment is in fact rendered all the less understandable by his recognition of the dual nature of its concern with "criticism and power," (68) in his statement that "(t)he science of freedom (i.e. Enlightenment scholarship) was intended as a practical science" (69). His conclusion of the second volume on a brief consideration of the American Revolution as "the (Enlightenment) programme in practice," and an assessment of **The Federalist** as "a classic work of the Enlightenment" (70) is not only quite inadequate in the depth of its analysis but only serves to underline the fundamental ambiguity of the Enlightenment's politics. For while we can indeed perceive the strong influence of the "eighteenth century commonwealthman", of natural rights

libertarianism, in colonial and revolutionary thought, we can also find there, as William Appleman Williams has persuasively argued, strong elements of the mercantilist, nationalist, and conservative traditions (71).

If, in the latter half of this examination of Peter Gay's **The Enlightenment: An Interpretation** I have struck a somewhat critical note, it should not be allowed to detract, however, from the profound admiration it nevertheless elicits in me. In an age in which the forces of unreason and irrationality are ever more rampant, in "counter culture" and "ivory tower" alike, Gay's work provides and eloquent and much needed reminder of -- and tribute to -- the revolutionary significance of Reason in human history. To enter, via the two volumes of Gay's study, the intellectual world of the Enlightenment is to enter the dazzling realm of the promise of rationalism. If the **philosophes** failed to fulfil that promise, their work nevertheless still provides us with both inspiration and instruction. Learning from both the achievements and the errors of the past we must, and can, ensure that **this** time a revolution of reason will not be betrayed, that **every** vestige, political and intellectual, of the "old order" will at last be deservedly swept into the dustbin of history. And to replace that "old order", which is alas still with us, for the contemporary radical libertarian the inspiring vision is that voiced so movingly by Condorcet, of "(t)he moment ... when the sun will shine only on free men on this earth, on men who will recognize no master but their reason."

#### NOTES

1. In **Left and Right: A Journal of Libertarian Thought**, 1(1), Spring 1965.
2. **The Open Society and its Enemies, Vol. 2: The High Tide of Prophecy**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1945, p. 303.

3. **European Thought in the Eighteenth Century**, Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1965, p. 7.
4. **The Enlightenment: An Interpretation; Vol. 1: The Rise of Modern Paganism, Vol. 2: The Science of Freedom**, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1967, 1970.
5. **The Science of Freedom**, p. 567.
6. **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, "Preface", p. xiii.
7. Compare Gay's work with, for example, Preserved Smith's **The Enlightenment, 1687-1776** (Vol. 2 of **A History of Modern Culture**), Collier, New York, 1962, a quite worthy and exhaustive study on more conventional lines.
8. **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, p. 72.
9. **Ibid.**, pp. 72-82, 89-94. One need not accept the rest of Cassirer's Kantian philosophy to recognize the penetration and value of his work on this topic (and others in the history of ideas). An accessible introduction to his views on the nature of myth can be found in Part 1, "What is Myth", of his **The Myth of the State**, Yale University Press, 1946. The similarities between Cassirer's concept of myth and the fallacies of conceptual realism and methodological holism are also noteworthy.
10. **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, p. 209.
11. **Ibid.**, p. 225.
12. **Ibid.**, p. 211.



13. **Ibid.**, p. 212. But if the **philosophes** were basically correct, then why should any rational person want to strip away their "emotional terminology", the rightful expression of a righteous outrage?
14. **Ibid.**, p. 256.
15. **Ibid.**, p. 266.
16. **Ibid.**, p. 270
17. Quoted in **Ibid.**, p. 160.
18. **Ibid.**, p. 3
19. **The Science of Freedom**, p. 48.
20. **Ibid.**, p. 368.
21. **Ibid.**, p. 367.
22. As Rothbard states: "In actuality, this was not at all the case; the King and his nation-state served rather as a super-feudal overlord re-imposing and reinforcing feudalism just as it was being dissolved by the peaceful growth of the market economy. The King superimposed his own restrictions and monopoly privileges onto those of the feudal regime. The absolute monarchs were the Old Order writ large and made even more despotic than before. Capitalism, indeed, flourished earliest and most actively precisely in those areas where the central State was weak or non-existent: the Italian cities, the Hanseatic League, the confederation of 17th century Holland ... industry and the market (expanded) through the interstices

of the feudal order (e.g. industry in England developing in the countryside beyond the grip of the feudal State, and guild restrictions), "Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty", **op. cit.**, p. 5.

23. **The Science of Freedom**, pp. 47-48.
24. **The Myth of the State**, pp. 179,180.
25. **European Thought in the Eighteenth Century**, p. 301.
26. **The Science of Freedom**, p. 567.
27. Quoted by Gay, **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, p. 138.
28. **The Science of Freedom**, p. 188; and on this whole issue, pp. 187-201.
29. **Ibid**, p. 192.
30. On this point, see Kingsley Martin, **French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Political Ideas from Bayle to Condorcet**, Harper Torchbook, New York, 1963, pp. 18, 122.
31. **The Science of Freedom**, p. 459.
32. Elie Halevy, **The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism**, Faber & Gwyer, London, 1928, pp. 84, 144.
33. See Kingsley Martin, **op. cit.**, p. 8, on this point.

34. **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, p. 433.
35. Gay is commenting specifically on Gertrude Himmelfarb's essay, "The Haunted House of Jeremy Bentham", in her **Victorian Minds**, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1968, where a powerful case is made for the thesis that Bentham's "Panopticon" scheme was "nothing less than the existential realization of Philosophic Radicalism." (p. 75). A similar interpretation of utilitarianism is also made by Halevy in **The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism**, *passim*, and especially pp. 82-85 on the Panopticon. Shirley R. Letwin, in **The Pursuit of Certainty**, Cambridge University Press, 1965, dismisses the Panopticon as a "momentary aberration" (p. 182), stresses the individualist and libertarian assumptions in Bentham's philosophy, and argues that "(t)he moral foundation of Bentham's system was not the principle of utility but his conviction that to deny to a normal adult the right to determine his own life was to treat him as a child and to derogate from his dignity as a rational being" (p. 138). However, even Letwin concedes that Bentham in his more austere Utilitarian writings "(b)y ruthlessly ignoring the refractions of ideas and emotions ... produced devices of a monstrous efficiency that left no room for humanity. In his ardour for reform, Bentham prepared the way for what he feared" (p.188). And what he feared, Letwin argues, was a coercive and altruistic State paternalism.
36. **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, p. 432.
37. **Ibid.**, pp. 401, 403.
38. **The Science of Freedom**, p. 403 and *passim*.
39. Sheldon S. Wolin, "Hume and Conservatism," **American Political Science**

Review, XLVIII(4), Dec. 1954.

40. J. L. Talmon, **The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy**, Secker & Warburg, London, 1952; Louis Bredvold, **The Brave New World of the Enlightenment**, University of Michigan Press, 1961.
41. **The Science of Freedom**, pp. 126-133.
42. **Ibid.**, p. 164.
43. **Ibid.**, pp. 126, 128.
44. **The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason**, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1955. And see also Murray N. Rothbard, "The Mantle of Science", in H. Schoeck & J. W. Wiggins, eds., **Scientism and Values**, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1960, for a brief but equally incisive treatment.
45. Hayek, **ibid.**, p. 107.
46. **The Structure of Evil: An Essay on the Unification of the Science of Man**, George Braziller, New York, 1968. A particularly incisive assessment of scientism has been made by Yves R. Simon, in his **The Philosophy of Democratic Government**, University of Chicago Press, 1951: "A new lust for domination over men, shaped after the pattern of domination over nature, had developed in technique-minded men ... (its) highly emotional humanitarianism ... did not blind everybody to the fact that a new imperialism, a new lust for absolute power, was finding expression." (p. 44).

47. **The Science of Freedom**, p. 497.
48. **Ibid.**, p. 48 and **passim**.
49. **Ibid.**, pp. 514-516. Interestingly enough, Helvetius was the most anti-individualist, anti-market and utilitarian of all the **philosophes** -- a fact one does not learn from Gay. See Kingsley Martin, **French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century**, **op. cit.**, pp. 178, 181-186.
50. **The Science of Freedom**, p. 529.
51. **Ibid.**, p. 530.
52. **Ibid.**, p. 532.
53. **Ibid.**, p. 530.
54. **Ibid.**, p. 552
55. **Ibid.**, p. 530.
56. Crane Brinton, **The Shaping of the Modern Mind**, New American Library, New York, 1953, p. 135.
57. Quoted, p. 219, in T. D. Campbell, **Adam Smith's Science of Morals**, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1971.
58. A. L. Macfie, **The Individual in Society: Papers on Adam Smith**, Allen & Unwin, London, 1971.

59. See, on this topic, Sheldon S. Wolin, **Politics and Vision**, Allen & Unwin, London, 1961, pp. 344-345.
60. Gladys Bryson, **Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century**, Princeton University Press, 1945, p. 160.
61. Macfie, **op. cit.**, p. 49.
62. In fact praised by Marx. See Duncan Forbes, "Introduction", p. xxxi, to Adam Ferguson, **An Essay on the History of Civil Society**, Edinburgh University Press, 1966, on this point, and also David Kettler, **The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson**, Ohio State University Press, 1965, "Introduction". On the oversocialized conception of man in Ferguson, see Kettler, pp. 193-197, and William C. Lehman, **Adam Ferguson and the Beginnings of Modern Sociology**, Columbia University Press, 1930, pp. 69-73.
63. **The Theory of Economic Policy in English Classical Political Economy**, London, Macmillan, 1965, p. 11, my emphasis. Smith's general "moderation", his nationalism, and his conservatism are also stressed in William Clyde Dunn's "Adam Smith and Edmund Burke: Complementary Contemporaries", **Southern Economic Journal**, Vol. VII, No. 3, January 1941, which demonstrates the wide intellectual agreement of the two respective founders of Classical Economics and Classical Conservatism. And, of course, as Liberalism became synonymous with Utilitarianism it became progressively less concerned with individualism, libertarianism and justice. Robbins in fact makes a very firm distinction between the "two distinct philosophical origins" of Liberalism, i.e. between natural law and utilitarianism, and stresses that, while sharing certain individualist sentiments, it was utilitarian to the core. This was true

even for Adam Smith, who was influenced by the Stoic concept of natural law and frequently used the rhetoric of "sacred rights" and "natural liberty."

64. As Lionel Robbins shows, all the major Classical Economists were quite vehement in their denunciation of **laissez-faire** as an abstract standard. The acceptance of the principle and legitimacy of state intervention by the Classicists, whatever their disagreements regarding the degree of such intervention that was desirable at any moment in time, leads Professor Robbins to stress, from Adam Smith to J. M. Keynes, "the essential continuity of thought in the tradition of economic liberalism concerning the positive nature of the co-operation between the State and the individual", **The Theory of Economic Policy**, *op. cit.*, p. 38. And for the significance of this fact for Robbins himself, see Chris R. Tame, "A Note on Lionel Robbins", **Wertfrei: A Review of Praxeological Science**, No. 2, Spring 1974.
66. Robbins, *op. cit.*, p. 26. On Adam Smith specifically, see Robert L. Heilbroner, "The Paradox of Progress: Decline and Decay in 'The Wealth of Nations'", **Journal of the History of Ideas**, XXXIV(2), April/June, 1973. On Ricardo's fatal errors concerning the conflict of interests within the market, see Ludwig von Mises, **The Free and Prosperous Commonwealth**, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1960, and Leonard P. Liggio, "Mises and History", **Libertarian Forum**, VI(1), January 1974.
66. I have discussed these issues further in two as yet unpublished papers, both entitled "Why Did Classical Liberalism Fail?", at The Adam Smith Club (Institute of Economic Affairs, London), May 1977 and the Second World Convention of the Libertarian International, Royal Holloway College, Egham, August 1984.
67. Wolin, **Politics and Vision**, *op. cit.*, p. 343. Of course, Wolin tends

to overstate his case, ignoring the other intellectual themes present in the thought of those he analyses (and, for that matter, in the choice of those figures, and the exclusion of others, he takes as representing the liberal tradition). Nevertheless, he does demonstrate an important truth, that concerning the frequent pessimism, conservatism, and collectivism that featured -- and eventually predominated -- within the mainstream of liberalism.

68. Gay, **The Rise of Modern Paganism**, "Preface," p. xiii.
69. Gay, **The Science of Freedom**, p. 555. It might be objected that Gay has anticipated such criticisms in his comments in the "Preface" to the second volume. He states therein that he has deliberately avoided "one large area of evaluation," i.e., of "the possible relevance of the Enlightenment to our time" -- the reason being "to avoid value judgments" and to restrict himself to "an act of definition, not evaluation" (*ibid.* p. xi). But it is surely apparent, from both this essay and Gay's own work, that such a separation cannot be viably made. The questions we ask in any historical analysis, in any attempt at an historical definition (especially so in the history of ideas) are a product of our conception (whether it is made explicit or not) of the abstract nature of ideas and values and by our own values themselves. Gay's failure to come to terms adequately with the ultimate and political significance of the Enlightenment is thus not simply a matter of failing to tag on some concluding comments regarding its "possible relevance ... to our time." It is a failure to deal with its most vital and central defining characteristics, its inherent and abstract intellectual, philosophic and moral nature. The Enlightenment's relevance to our time lies precisely in the answers (and their implications) to the most "scholarly" questions regarding its defining qualities -- was its scheme of values internally consistent or not, did its philosophy contain fatal features that undermined much of its original intention, was its perception of



its own significance an accurate one...? It is such questions we have begun to attempt to answer in this essay.

70. Gay, **The Science of Freedom**, p. 563.
71. See Williams, **The Contours of American History**, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1966, especially the introduction, "British Mercantilism as the Political Economy of English Backwardness," and pp. 77-125 of the first section, "The Age of Mercantilism, 1740--1828."
72. We have not commented in this essay on the felicities of style and literary construction of Gay's work, on its lucidity and almost symphonic construction which integrates with such apparent ease and in so sparkling and rational a manner so vast a degree of learning. This characteristic is indeed fitting from an author whose latest work is on **Style in History**, in which he stresses the intellectual significance of style, the unity of style and philosophic outlook, in the work of the historian.

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**Textual Note:** A number of minor grammatical and stylistic corrections have been made and sub-headings have been added.

### 3: THE CRITICAL LIBERALISM OF J. M. ROBERTSON

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#### I: Introduction

The old adage that history is always written by the victor is as true for the history of ideas as for the more dramatic record of conflict in political and military affairs.

In the history of both political thought and social theory J. M. Robertson was on the losing side. The ideas he expounded and the movements of which he was a part, or even led, are those which during this century have been pushed from the forefront of political and intellectual life. Why, then, should I - and hopefully the reader - be concerned with the act of reclamation which this essay is attempting? The answer is twofold. Firstly, there is such a thing as objective history, and whether or not one has any sympathy with Robertson or his outlook, his consignment to an Orwellian "memory hole" can only distort our understanding of the historical record. As Conrad Kaczkowski states in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, Robertson was "an outstanding and representative figure of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (1). An understanding of his role in both intellectual matters and political life can only help illuminate the history of the period. Secondly, some of us might consider it premature, as well as less than just, to consign both Robertson and the liberal movement of which he was an important part to the ideological dustbin of history. Admittedly, intellectual and political currents, in both "left-" and 'right-wing' guises, which we can label broadly as statist, collectivist, anti-individualistic, authoritarian, and irrationalist, have been the predominant "paradigm" in economic, political and social thought for most of the twentieth century (2). But the past twenty years have seen a steady renaissance of radical, rationalist and individualistic liberalism (3). For those of us, like myself, in sympathy with this liberal revival, the rediscovery of Robertson not merely aids the propagation of the liberal perspective, but can assist in a more viable reformulation of it. In other words, we can hopefully profit from a grasp of both the strengths and weaknesses, the valid and the invalid, the successes and failures of the thought of a great exponent of liberalism.

For those not in sympathy with Robertson's political position, however, an understanding of it will at least give a clearer grasp of its ideological character, and that of its present-day liberal adherents.

## II: Class Conflict and the Economic Interpretation of History

Part of Robertson's significance and greatness lies in the wealth of his intellectual concerns. A multi-lingualist of immense learning, he applied his mind to, and wrote extensively on, a multitude of subjects. In all areas his work was characterised by both breadth and depth of knowledge, clarity of expression, and intellectual insight, on which Professor Stanislav Andreski has positively commented (4). However, it is primarily the political significance of Robertson with which I am concerned. As Kaczkowski declares, he was "a well-known radical-liberal theoretician and politician, he played an active role in British politics for over twenty years and was a recognised authority on economic questions, in particular free trade" (5). My focus will not be so much on his role in **party** politics but on his significance as a thinker, as one of the last great representatives of a major tradition of liberal thought.

The roots of one tradition of liberalism in class analysis, in a broad sociological perspective and in an economic interpretation of history have, until relatively recently, been forgotten. At best, liberal class analysts and historians have been consigned by Marxists to footnotes as vague and alleged "precursors" of Marxist sociology and historical materialism (6). However, in Britain this liberal sociological outlook was co-extensive with the development of liberal economics. Adam Smith's economics, for example, was very much part of a broader "sociological" concern with, as he put it, "the general principle of law and government and of the different revolutions they have undergone in different periods of society" (7). **The Wealth of Nations** embodied much of Smith's historical sociology and his analysis of class factors in economic and political life. This approach was in fact shared, to a greater or lesser degree, by the whole "Scottish School" or "Scottish Enlightenment". Smith never completed his proposed broader study although the rediscovery of a longer version of his **Lectures on Jurisprudence** gives further evidence of his philosophy of history). But his colleague John Millar, in his major work **The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks** (8), delineated systematically a liberal analysis of class formation and conflict and of historical development.

The major stream of British liberalism chose, however, to refine the tools of classical economic analysis, rather than develop its historical and sociological insights. The last of the major classicists to maintain a class and historical analysis as a broader political economy' wedded to liberal values was James E. Thorold Rogers (9). But he left no disciples and, insofar as he was remembered, it was as a founding father of empirical economic history. Henry Thomas Buckle was really the only nineteenth century historian to attempt a detailed liberal philosophy of history. But in spite of a brief period of popular acclaim, he too exerted little influence and left no disciples.

Robertson was, then, the last great exponent in Britain of liberal class and historical analysis. He was consciously indebted to the Scottish School (1), to Charles Comte (11) and to Buckle, to whom he devoted a major critical study (12) and whose **History** he edited in a fine annotated version (13). Of Rogers he said that he "enlarged in a suggestive fashion" on the economic interpretation of history, but that his "application of the principle does not carry us far" (14) - an incorrect assessment in my view.

### III: Historical Sociology

What, then, was the nature of the liberal class and historical analysis championed by Robertson? His concern in his historical work as in all his scholarship was to apply "scientific thoroughness" in "the statement of historic causation", to discover "general laws" and to establish "determining conditions, the economic above all" in a "true science of social evolution" (15).

His interpretation was not, however, the dogmatic assertion of aprioristic axioms, for he stressed the importance of the "study of the concrete process" (16). His "economic interpretation" was largely a view of the "economic motive" in human behaviour, not an ascription of irresistible influence to particular social institutions or so-called "modes of production". In this sense "sociological truth" is ultimately "rooted in psychology and biology" (17). "The main primary

factors in politics or corporate life" are thus "all-pervading biological forces, or tendencies of attraction and repulsion" between individuals (18). He insisted on the one hand that economic motives be recognised as affecting social action in general, and on the other that "varying forms of social machinery react variously on intellectual life" (19). He explicitly rejected any view of inevitability in historical events or any mono-causal approach to them, "so many and so complex are the forces and conditions of progress in civilisation" (20). Thus "functions that were originally determined by external conditions came in time to be initial causes - the teeth and claws so to speak, fixing the way of life for the body politic" (21).

His view of class conflict is clear. "Home politics", he declared, "is the sum of the strifes and compromises of classes, interests, factions, sects, theorists, in all countries and in all ages" (22). The history of the world is as much one of **class co-operation** as well as **conflict**, and of classes conceived **broadly** in terms of all sorts of interest groups and ideologies, not merely as some automatic reflex of the "mode of production". Neither did he adhere to the utopian delusion of the so-called "scientific socialist" that this conflict would ever end: "the clash of opposing tendencies is perpetual, ubiquitous, inevitable" (23), although modes of conflict might well change (i.e., the "blind" conflict of war might well be replaced with more civilised intellectual conflict). History was, in Robertson's view, thus an "endless process of compromise among social forces" (24) to which "movements of true public spirit" contribute as well as more venal clashes of "class needs and interests" (25). He was not driven to crude collectivism which negated the role of individuals as compared to "classes" - "men of genius have counted for something in all stages of upward human evolution" (26).

We might have been spared much tedious historical exegesis if Robertson's balanced view of motivations had prevailed over countless Marxist-inspired attempts to demonstrate the "economic basis" of every social phenomenon. Thus, he explicitly commented on the fruitless attempts to discuss the "class politics" of religious conflict in the late Tudor period - fruitless since "in reality class politics was for the most part superseded by sect politics" (27). In other words, religious disagreements, "destructive passions", could lead to real conflict just as much

as clashes of "real" economic or political interest. Economic determinism, then, "used as a sole interpretive principle ... may lead to all manner of errors". The correct historical method is clearly to "recognise and trace the reactions of all the factors" (28). It was this balanced and sensible approach to historical causation that he saw embodied in "the method and basis of Buckle" above all others.

In view of the short shrift given to liberal class theoreticians and historians by Marxist scholars, one cannot but take ironic satisfaction in Robertson's similar treatment of Marxist historical materialism - in his parenthetical observation that "several members of the Marxian school have dealt very acutely and instructively with the element of economic causation in ancient and modern life" (29). For Robertson, Marxism represented little more than a partisan expropriation of a liberal doctrine, "arbitrarily applied by Marx to civilisation in the light of a class gospel and a doctrinaire purpose" (30). Moreover, Marx's approach was vitiated by putting a "catastrophic and finally static theory of social destiny under a pseudo-evolutionary form" (31). Its persistence as a political ideology, a quasi-religious hope, was to Robertson "in itself an extremely interesting sociological phenomenon" (32). Elsewhere he declared that in **Das Kapital** there was "a sociological teaching of permanent importance, and that is the principle which has been stated by [Marx's] followers as 'Economic determinism'". But he emphasised again that this was not original to Marx, merely "newly applied". The perspective originated in the Scottish writers and in Charles Comte, and Buckle was, "as it were, resuscitating a buried movement and reviving a forgotten interest". If this point was understood, he declared, scholars would be "less dithyrambic over the service done to sociology by Marx". What Marx had added to the approach was to wed it to absurd economic doctrines, like "surplus value", and to "formal fallacies of the most grotesque description" (33).

#### IV: The Application of Class Analysis

Robertson's studies were not dictated by simple scholarly interest. He sought a usable past. "Either we are thus to learn from history", he declared, "or all history is as a novel without a purpose" (34). His principal application of class analysis in contemporary politics lay in his defence of Free Trade against the rising forces of Protectionism. Free Trade was not simply science itself, "the unshakable inference of a hundred years of economic experience verifying the economic science on which the great experiment was founded", but its abridgement was a classic case of the acquisition of special privilege by a distinct class interest. Thus he declared:

"Tariffs are engineered by grafters, and grafters will never, of their own accord, let go their hold. Tariffs fail to secure prosperity; and so the industries which have been trained to rely upon them, as crutches, demand to have bigger and stronger crutches to rely upon ... In all countries there is a multitude of men who have absolutely no scruple about enriching themselves at the expense of their fellow countrymen in general ... The simple principle is, 'Get what you can, by any monopoly that you can impose. Make your neighbour pay. If you think you can make the foreigner pay, do so, of course, with all your heart' ... [Tariffism] is the policy of plundering your fellow-citizens to fill your own pockets". (36).

He noted that liberal democracies had not remained immune from the forces of class pressure and mutual predation:

"It must be recognised that in the way of collective tyranny the modern democracies have abundantly proved that they are 'sisters under the skins' with the autocracies and aristocracies of the past, and are as zealous to play the game of beggar-my neighbour as were the trade guilds and monopolies of the Middle Ages". (37)



## V: Liberalism and Sociology

Other aspects of Robertson's sociology were equally wedded to his liberal concerns. In his "The Sociology of Race", a discussion of the "eloquent fiasco" (38) of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's **Foundations of the Nineteenth Century** (the classic statement of racism), he effectively disposed of both its historical idiocies and its absurdities of reasoning. In **The Germans** he refuted the "Teutonic Gospel of Race" with a wealth of historical and ethnological evidence "which once for all reduce[s] to absurdity the theory of the hereditary possession by any race or race-mixture of qualities which ensure their progress or 'success'" under any conditions" (39). In **The Saxon and the Celt** (40) he made a similar critique of the "Anglo-Saxon" version of racial superiority, which cast the Celtic peoples in the inferior role. And he made adverse comments on racialist explanations in his book on Buckle (41).

In matters of foreign affairs Robertson shared the "isolationist", anti-interventionist orientation which characterised much of the classical liberal tradition. He thus denounced "thoughtless demands for intervention in the affairs of foreign nations, impossible proposals to redress the wrongs suffered by foreigners at the hands of their own people" (42). Kaczkowski comments that Robertson's position stemmed less from the **laissez-faire** classical liberal tradition than from his moral thesis that the basis of all human relations was "reciprocity" (43). However, it was **precisely** the ideal of reciprocity, the harmony of human interests, that the classical liberals saw as embodied in free trade and which in their view necessitated a new order of international peace (45). Robertson himself declared that "a sane Political Economy had done more for the promotion of peace than all the moral exhortation in other literature" (46).

Robertson was a major influence (along with such anti-war liberals as Herbert Spencer, Gustave de Molinari and Jacques Novicow) on the last great figure in the liberal anti-war tradition, Norman Angell. Angell's essay "War as the Failure of Reason" was published along with an essay by Robertson in a volume entitled **Essays Towards Peace** (49). I would emphasise that Robertson was not a dogmatic pacifist and never allowed his desire for peace to lead him

into ignoring aggressive intentions when they arose. Thus his opposition to increased naval estimates ceased the moment Germany's aims became obvious, and he analysed and denounced the "civicidal madness" of the theory and practice of German "Caesarism" (50). Although a founder member (and President) with Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner of the Rationalist Peace Society in 1910, they both supported the First World War, while allowing that Britain, "in common with other great Powers, may have been guilty of faults of omission and commission". In a statement signed by them, and issued in the name of the Committee of the RPS in 1916, Robertson and Bonner rejected absolutist pacifism, declared that "moral appeal" was quite useless against the "ruthless barbarian", and held that there were two classes of war which, "lamentable as they must be, might yet be quite justifiable", namely "wars of defence and wars of independence" (51).

Robertson's position on imperialism was marked by a similar balance. Imperialism might be a bad ideal, but the British Empire was in existence and a sudden withdrawal might also have undesirable consequences (52). He considered imperialism detrimental for various reasons. Massive imperial concentrations of power lead, by clear psychological laws, to a spiral of enmity and to the creation of "zealous enemies" (53), who perceive the concentration of power as a threat to which they respond by embarking on a similar course of imperial expansion. Imperialism, in his view, also encouraged both the "nominally defunct principle of a monopoly market" (54) and "primitive racial egoism", destroying the "instinct of domestic sympathy" (55).

In his most detailed critique of imperialism, **Patriotism and Empire**, Robertson sought to find its class roots, the specific interests that profit from it. I find his analysis less than successful, for it is never clear whether he believed that industry, financial interests, the business class as a whole (or as distinct groups) profited from imperialism, or whether it was merely specific sections of these groups that did so (56).

Ironically, Robertson's failure to produce a really satisfactory account of imperialism can be

seen as the result of not following his own methodological precepts. Such an account would need to integrate a sensitive perception of the role and nature of classes and interest groups (without falling into fallacious reifications) with an understanding of the role of both mistaken ideas and atavistic psychological motives.

But if Robertson did not always live up to his own philosophy, he did at least make its principles clear. This philosophy lies firmly in the liberal tradition of methodological individualism that warned against raising concepts and categories into supposedly real entities, and against perceiving reality in mere allegory. "Beware of allegorical sociology", he declared in a critique of Schaffle, the German academic sociologist who expended "enormous effort" on elaborating "the dream of a 'social organism'", a "kind of actual Leviathan" into a scientific demonstration (57).

## **VI: Robertson as a Political Thinker: Socialist, Neo-Liberal or 'Guarded Individualist'?**

Characterising the nature of Robertson's liberalism has not always appeared easy, however. Martin Page has described him as "one of the unsung prophets of the British Welfare State" (58) and one of his oldest friends, J. P. Gilmour, termed him a "philosophical Socialist" (59). However, his other close friend, John A. Hobson, opined that "Robertson stood upon the whole by laissez-faire liberalism" (60). And Kaczkowski similarly describes him as a strict Bright-Cobden Liberal when it came to economics and free-trade ... the last Liberal of the rationalist-radical tradition" (61).

Some of Robertson's statements do indeed suggest that he was a socialist. He once seemed to refer to himself as a "scientific socialist" although his wording is somewhat ambiguous (62). Elsewhere he declares "an ultimate Socialism" to be "the highest ideal" (63). Moreover, his work is full of critical remarks on laissez-faire and on free-market capitalism. "Mere Free Trade and laissez-faire", he declared, "have not produced and cannot conceivably produce a

really sound society. They have yielded us a large and blindly multiplying proletariat, subject to deplorable fluctuations of employment and comfort ..." (64). He attacked what he described as "a deadening competitive industrialism", its "ugliness, apathy, and degradation" (66) and "the social rapine of self-seeking trade" (67) He concluded: "Decidedly, our needed social solutions are not being reached on the lines of laissez-faire" (68).

Similarly, he seemed to accept the socialist view that a boom and bust cycle was inherent in a free market, saying that "the periodic miseries [arose] out of industrial anarchy" (69) and that there was something irrational about a "blind industrial competition" (70). He thus declared that he had "no fixed prejudice against legislation as such" (71) and advocated such measures as "socialisation of public monopoly profits as those of railways, banks, gas-works, water-works" (72). He also spoke in favour of state old-age pensions and taxation of "unearned wealth" (73). Throughout his book on Buckle he criticised that writer's laissez-faire position. Robertson's "socialism" thus seems to resemble that of those socialist and **neo-liberal** thinkers who argued that a rational and scientific society is one in which "society" scientifically chose to regulate "itself". In reality this view is actually a form of "scientism", a fallacious view of the nature of science and a a profoundly unscientific understanding of the nature of social processes (74). Some of Robertson's most "scientistic" statements can be found in his generally approving discussion (75) of the American sociologist Lester Ward, himself a classic expounder of the scientistic approach. In his 1891 essay "Outlines of Social Reconstruction", Robertson saw "a greater measure of equality in material well-being" as attainable through "the corporate action of the citizens through their political machinery" (76). Such interventionism represented in his view a "collectively conscious society, a society which has realised evolution and is constructing a universal sociology" (77).

Consistent with all this is Robertson's very critical evaluation (78) of the radical libertarian writer Auberon Herbert who, as the leading American anarchist Benjamin Tucker declared, was "a true anarchist in everything but name" (79). Hopefully Martin Page's in-progress biography of Robertson will illuminate his relations with the radical liberals and individualists of

the period. He certainly held one of them, Joseph Hiam Levy (not to be confused with the socialist writer Hyman Levy), in high regard (80) and, while editor of **The National Reformer**, featured Levy's essays in it frequently, as Bradlaugh had done before him (81) Other individualist contributions which Robertson published in this journal included an essay on "Freedom and Marriage" by Wordsworth Donisthorpe (82), which had been rejected by **The Liberty Annual**, the publication of the Liberty and Property Defense League. Donisthorpe's was, along with Herbert and Levy, one of the leading radical individualist thinkers of the period, although like his fellows, now generally written out of intellectual history and mainstream views of the history of liberalism (83). Whilst Editor of **The Free Review** Robertson published essays by many of these diverse individualist and anarchist writers (84).

Nevertheless, in spite of all the above, Robertson, throughout virtually all his writings, distances himself from socialism proper. Moreover, for every anti-capitalist remark, there are at least as many hostile evaluations of socialism. He castigated reformers who "interfere with reasonable freedom in their gropings after improvement" and who "openly flout the eternal yearning of men for freedom". While praising the honesty of both socialists and individualists, he stated that they represented "extremes of error". "'A plague o' both your houses!'" was his final judgment (85).

Robertson also repeatedly described the great classical liberal Herbert Spencer as his "intellectual father" (86) and as "one of the great minds of the modern world" (87). He considered Spencer's polemic against the sins of legislators to be "powerful and often unanswerable", and agreed that "a great deal of modern philanthropic legislation has missed its mark". Spencer, he said, "remains one of the most effective monitors against hasty legislative action" (88). He also praised John Stuart Mill for the eloquence and wisdom of his support for "a doctrine that is ever being venomously assailed and too often being sullied", namely "the doctrine that the good of mankind is a dream if it is not to be secured by preserving for all men the possible maximum of liberty of action and of freedom of thought" (89). Again, Robertson's hostile comments about laissez-faire can be balanced by favourable ones about its "fundamental truth"

(90). Society, he said, had "gained much from its application" (91), and while "quite done with as a pretext for leaving uncured deadly social evils which admit of curative treatment by State action", laissez-faire "is not done with as a principle of rational limitation of State interference", and as a "wholesome caveat against hasty scheming" (92).

Robertson distanced himself from socialism in his earliest writings, but his hostility to it does seem to become **more** pronounced and more systematic in his later works. Thus in **Fiscal Fraud and Folly**, a passionate critique of protectionism, he lumps together in an ideological rogues' gallery "political adventurers, opportunists, grafters, socialists, and sciolists in general" (93). He doubted the feasibility of centrally planning an entire society and attacked trade union leaders who thought they "know in advance all about the real treatment of the vast complexity of industry and international trade, and this by [their] inner light as ... good Trade Unionist[s]" (94). In this context he went on to criticise certain trade unionists for "unlimited interference with international, to say nothing of domestic trade". Socialist theorists like G. D. H. Cole were lambasted for relying on mere "well-worn doctrinary formula" instead of offering detailed expositions of how a socialist society would operate. He added:

"Socialism, staking the whole frame of society on an a priori theory of an inexhaustible public spirit, is revealed in its foremost exponents, as so lacking in true public spirit, as distinct from class spirit, that they have never scientifically thought out the very problem they handle, finding and offering only prophecies in support of their proclivity ... If you ask for the deeds of Socialism, you have them in Soviet Russia. Look on that picture, and then look back on the record of Free Trade". (95)

He also observed sardonically that he was "unaware" that the Labour Party "possessed or accepted any economist", and stated that he had "never detected in Mr. Cole's polemic an economic as distinguished from a sectarian ethical ideal" (96).

The example of Soviet Russia seems to bode large in Robertson's shift of emphasis. The socialist school had "tried its hand", in Russia and the "terrific object-lesson" correctly accounted, in his view, for the "large body of solid scepticism among the workers as to Communist promises" (97).

One of Robertson's last political works was the dour and memorable **The Decadence** of 1929. Written under the pseudonym "L. Macaulay" as an imaginary account, by a future historian of 1949, of the "decay of England", it rings even truer now than when he penned it. It is a vision of the "commercial suicide of the United Kingdom" and a settling of scores with all those who had contributed to the collapse. Who, then, were the guilty men? There were the businessmen, those who had abandoned free trade for the legalised theft of tariffs, "the traders who, once honestly proud of their honest and helpful if commonplace commerce, of their service in lightening the burden of life for the mass of mankind, were now grown still prouder of their acquired function of licensed pickpockets". There were also the socialists advocating wholesale nationalisation but who lacked intellectual honesty. Refusing to accept the evidence of individual failures of their schemes, they had always pleaded that socialism could and would succeed when applied to a whole nation. But, Robertson declared, "socialism had been so applied in Russia", with "miserable social and industrial failure" as the result (98). Marxian socialism was a "doctrinaire dream, scientifically on all fours with all the previous and contemporary Utopianisms ... demonstrably a spurious equation, in which the really vital factors were falsified". The "unthinking" adherents of Marxism, in his view, "knew neither economics nor history" (99). But it was such doctrinaires who, in Robertson's opinion, were the "aggressive driving force" in "most labour constituencies". Believing "all the encomiums of a non-existent prosperity" in the Soviet Union, its adherents disrupted the meetings of their liberal opponents. Moreover, such intolerance was not restricted merely to the ranks of the Marxists. Socialists generally were "scheming for a society in which not only would there be no machinery whatever for the publication of criticism, since all would be bound to do their share of productive labour for the State alone, but criticism of the new social system itself would be absolutely prohibited". George Bernard Shaw's "genial" comment that "when once Socialism was estab-

lished, anyone who questioned the system would be sent to an insane asylum" was utterly representative of the prevailing authoritarianism of the Left. When liberals of a previous generation had pointed out that "socialism inevitably excluded the public criticism of its own validity, and involved a state monopoly of all printing and publication, the Socialists loudly denied the statement". But now, Robertson declared, "they avowed that under Socialism all critics of the system would at least be incarcerated" (100). In general, socialism offered mere "visionary issues" and an "appeal to ignorance, thoughtlessness, to gullibility". It relied on the "principle of inflaming and exploiting the ignorant" and, fundamentally, "on the great motive of envy" - in both class and personal respects. It was simply, in his view, the mirror-image of the predatory class politics of the Conservative Party and the business interests (101). Intellectually, socialism was merely "panacea mongering". Its exponents assumed that:

"While the ostensibly simple Golden Rule is incapable of strict individual fulfilment, a mathematical calculation of universal and unanimous right action for an entire nation can be imposed and successfully maintained. Men incapable of thoroughgoing morality could all be persuaded to fulfil a new commandment of completely right conduct under State Socialism. All that is needed, they proclaimed, is that the ideal way of life should be expounded. Then, even if everybody is not at first convinced, the converts can at least coerce the rest. Under coercion, the system will work to perfection." (102)

He held that, economically, socialism was utterly naive. "Confidently proposing to supersede the whole machinery of individual enterprise by which economic life had been built up", it ignored the roots of innovation. Thus socialists "took for granted that inventions of every kind would continue to abound, though nobody needed to secure or improve his own income by inventing anything, since there was already enough wealth for all, if only it were properly distributed" (103). "To comprehend the vast complexity of free commerce was beyond the power even of the Socialist intelligentsia in face of the Russian collapse." Their thoughts were little more than "draughts of philanthropic sentiment with grains of second-hand economic



theory", while the proletariat seemed convinced that trade-union secretaries could manage all industry and commerce, with fifty per cent. profits for all." (104)

The decline of Britain as outlined in **The Decadence** was fundamentally the result of **intellectual** failure. An intelligent public spirit was simply absent, and could not be appealed to against the prevalence of "sinister interests" and economic ignorance. As Robertson declared:

"A self-governing industrial State, dependent on the right judgment of its voters for the choice of right policies, can subsist only in virtue of adequate knowledge and judgment on the part of the majority of its electors. Nations which make economic decisions without knowledge of economic law must pay the economic penalty". (105)

Ultimately, the fall of Britain and the British Empire stemmed from the same "central fact" underlying that of the Roman Empire: "Men did not understand the total causation of their social system" (106). Industrial Britain had "let its heritage fall from its hands" and declined "from the status of a first-rate to that of a third-rate power" (107).

In his final years Robertson strenuously opposed attempts to incorporate the freethought and rationalist movement into some broader so-called "progressive movement" - an incorporation sought by a number of socialists and Marxists in a typical piece of "popular front" infiltration and manipulation. Robertson held that rationalists could honestly disagree over political positions, and that the growth of rationalism was encouraged more by the "rationalizing habit" of debate between them than by a political partisanship which would merely destroy or tear apart the established rationalist organisations (108). He had always opposed such "mergers" on tactical grounds, but his later opposition seemed much more marked by opposition to Marxism and socialism, per se. Communism was, in his view, "working irrationalism in the name of Reason" (109). In 1933 he penned his most notable refutation of the so-called "scientific Humanists" (i.e. Marxists), in an essay entitled "Contaminated Ideals". He roundly condemned as

fallacious Marxist historical materialism and "surplus value" theory, and "the deep-seated human bias to tyranny" which was manifest in Marx's "scheme of revolutionary brute force, slaughter, and class hatred in place of fraternity". The "dogmatic and coercive purpose ... inherent in the post-Owen Socialist ideal" was clear long ago, he declared, and in this connection he recalled the refusal of socialists in a debate with Bradlaugh to forswear censorship of non-socialist views. Both in their theory and in their practice in Soviet Russia, socialists, "after benefiting by the right of free speech, propose to abolish that right as soon as they triumph". He concluded: "In sum, then, the ideal of logical persuasion without a shadow of coercion, which is part and parcel of the rationalist ideal, is simply incompatible with the ostensible Socialist ideal." The "pretentious aggression" and "pseudo-science" of the Marxists were threatening "all ideals of free progress in systems which trample liberty under foot, and, dismissing persuasion, eviscerate the mental life even as we see today" (110). It did not escape him that Mussolini had "mentally evolved as a Socialist" (110).

Robertson's critique of socialism was not restricted to its Marxist or egalitarian forms. In his essay on "Utopia" he offered a biting critique of H. G. Wells' authoritarian Fabian socialism as well as of romantic utopias in general. Such literary absurdities represented a flight from the "depressing side of life" into a situation where all human dilemmas and problems dissolved into a picture harmony of perfection. Man, he argued, is not "an animal of whom it is predictable that every member of the species must and will one day live a mental life in terms of the ideals of Mr. Wells, or yours or mine". "Endless variation in congenital endowment, from the highest to the lowest", is ineradicable in the species (112). Robertson detected romantic utopianism in all forms of socialism. Socialists were, in his view, "zealots of the impossible" and "manufacturers of mere catchwords rather than of practicable policies" (113). They were possessed by a "consummate incompetence to face the practical problem" (114). Like Bradlaugh, he was saddened to find socialist doctrine "appealing to and applauded by, not the clear-headed and self-controlled workers, but the neurotic, the noisy, the passionate, the riotous" (115).

Robertson also objected strongly to the socialist **celebration** of class struggle. A class analysis of historical development did not, for him, imply an acceptance of class conflict as a phenomenon conducive to social progress or to the creation of either a more efficient or a more just society. In his view it was the "supreme duty of Liberalism", its "special mission and function" to "guard earnestly and actively against the recurring risk of class cleavage and class conflict" and to refuse to "pander to class hate either among the rich or among the poor" (116). The weakness of socialism lay not merely in the massive gap between its rhetorical claims and promises and its proposals for implementing its goals, but in the even greater discrepancy between its promises to create a "new Moral World" and its blatant "exploitation of malice" and "ingrained habit of hostility and virulence" (117). Those who champion the cause of labour against an ill-defined "bourgeoisie" ignored, in his view, its productive activities. They had succeeded only in erecting "labour" as a "concept and principle of disunion - a league of the hand-workers against all who are not of them, and an ideal of 'social revolution' in which they shall set their feet on the others' necks" (118).

A representative example of Robertson's shift to a more hostile evaluation of socialism can be found in his change of mind about the relationship between socialism and war. In early essays he declared that it was "hardly conceivable that, if France and Germany were socialised, the war spirit would remain as before" (119) and that one of the great merits of the socialist movement "is that it is really destroying the spirit of national enmity, as between the workers of the different nations" (120). By 1916 things looked a little different, and he noted then "the virtual surrender to German militarism made even by Socialists who profess to repudiate militarist ambitions" (121). He also observed the racialist tendencies of German socialist scholars such as Woltmann and Reimer, and declared:

"The thesis that men exist for the State and not the State for men, the maxim of obedience, the fixed habit of thinking in terms of nationality and not of humanity - all this seems to have been rather accentuated than modified by the Socialist agitation, which had seemed to put Internationalism

as its first postulate ... And latterly we find the Socialists themselves in large part permeated by the racial and national ideal, and, when not adopting it, visibly constrained to bow before it."

He concluded:

"It would be rash to say that without Socialism Prussianism might have refrained from precipitating war, but Socialism has been part of the inspiration of Armageddon" (122)

However, even in 1916, he still "recognize[d] in the Socialist ideal the highest ethical and the highest economic conception of social life." (123)

Robertson was quite clearly **not** a radical libertarian along the lines of his contemporaries Auberon Herbert, J. H. Levy, and Wordsworth Donisthorpe, or of such modern advocates as Ayn Rand, David Friedman, Murray Rothbard and Robert Nozick. But neither did most of the so-called laissez-faire liberals adhere to such a vigorous libertarianism (124). Nevertheless, simply to term him a neo-liberal along the lines of Hobson or Hobhouse seems to me not quite accurate either. He had a far greater commitment to individual liberty as both goal and method than in the case of most of the neo-liberals (125). This is reflected in his **The Meaning of Liberalism**, something of a definitive statement of his political philosophy, where he characterised liberalism as fundamentally "a movement of liberation" (126). And although he clearly moved from a greater to a less sanguine view of socialism and state interventionism, his thought remained largely coherent and consistent in its **basic** outlook. The preface to his 1892 book **The Fallacy of Saving** (127) included a long quotation from the neo-liberal Thomas Whittaker advocating that moderate intervention be considered on its merits, case by case. And in 1928 he contributed a Foreword to Whittaker's own treatise **The Liberal State**, which is a detailed exposition of this approach. He endorsed Whittaker's critique of authoritarian state

socialism, of "the drill-sergeants of the Fabian Society", and distinguished between liberal and illiberal elements in socialistic theory. Whittaker's approach, like Robertson's, was a moderate, basically individualist one, with "democratic" and "informed" state actions seen as sometimes necessary to achieve liberal and individualistic ends (128). It is surely significant that by 1933 Robertson was referring to his position as one of a "guarded individualism" (129). A little earlier he had characterised it as endorsing:

"[T]he maximum of liberty compatible with the law of reciprocity and the elaboration of that law with constant regard to the potential lawlessness of the spirit of liberty". (130).

## VII: Economics

Robertson may claim to be considered as an economic as well as a sociological and political thinker. The bulk of his work in this field is a defence of international free trade, the principle upon which, he declared in 1928, "Liberalism must stake its very existence" (131). His other contributions, however, bear the same ambiguities we have noted in his political thought.

Thus, in one of his earliest works, **The Eight Hours Question** (1893), he offered a cogent critique of the campaign for the state enforcement of an eight-hour working day and pointed to "the very real social dangers of an all-round interference with the hours of labour". Rejecting "crude Marxian economics" and the "happy-go-lucky inclination" for state interference, he offered the following assessment of the desirable division between free competition and state regulation:

"The instinct of freedom, if often astray, must necessarily be often right. Many people are now proceeding from a perception that **laissez-faire** has involved misery to an uncalculating determination to abolish **laissez-faire**

anyhow. They begin to delight in restriction for restriction's sake, thinking they establish human solidarity by every act of the kind. 'Fabian' writers are found claiming that all individual faculties are the property of society. But that is precisely the doctrine of the most fanatical of the Jacobins of the French Revolution, whose blind coercive action weakened social solidarity instead of increasing it. The evil is that humanitarians so often refuse to think out the real effects of their interferences." (133)

If this work represents the liberal pole of Robertson's economic thought, **The Fallacy of Saving** of 1892 shows him as a critic of classical economics, of what he called "the great error of the laissez-faire school ... that unlimited saving can support unlimited industry". His views on this matter can certainly be termed proto-Keynesian (135). But while he argued them more coherently than do other exponents of underconsumptionism and "funny money", they suffer, in my view, from the same fallacies as all such writings, including those of Keynes himself (136).

The tension between liberalism and interventionism was not resolved in the work of Robertson which comes closest to systematic economics, namely his **The Economics of Progress** of 1918. Here he restated his opposition to class struggle and his support for free trade and a mixed economy liberalism, where elements of nationalisation and "national management" would help eliminate "waste" (137). He also rejected the theories of the libertarian free banking advocates A. Egmont Hake and O. E. Wesslau (the authors of **Free Trade in Capital** and other works) (138). Of greatest relevance to socialism is his emphasis on the importance of production, for socialists of his time and ours act as if economic affairs are merely a matter of readjusting distribution of some static but adequate supply of resources. Robertson declared:

"Only through an increase of real production by economy of labour power of all kinds can labour be really advantaged ... There is no solution for labour on the lines of merely increasing the share without increasing the output. More

and more clearly does it appear that Mill was in error in stipulating for improved distribution without increase of production". (139)

A common tactic of anti-liberal scholars at least since the nineteenth century has been to challenge the validity of economic science by reference to the findings of anthropology and ethnology. The alleged existence of so-called non-commercial or non-economic societies and behaviour refutes, it is claimed, the universality of economic laws (140). In one of his last essays Robertson criticised anthropological investigations of "primitive economics" for being "needlessly anxious to dispute over general conceptions of economic action and causation" and for their common "desire to discredit all 'old' methods in political economy". "Economists", he countered, "have long known well enough that in both primitive and mediaeval life there were social and political and religious forces which created a situation largely different from the modern. It was the modern problem that they were concerned to study" (141).

## **VIII: Elements of Philosophy**

### **(i) Natural Rights and the Nature of Emotion**

While certainly contributing to the explication of many of the techniques of reason (as in his **Letters on Reasoning**), Robertson did not attempt to explore wider epistemological or metaphysical issues or to construct a scientific ethical system. Nevertheless, in a variety of areas he made a number of extremely suggestive and penetrating observations. Many of these are remarkably prescient of the approaches of liberal rationalist philosophers of today. For instance, he perceived that the source of - or need for - any sensible moral code must be a utilitarian one. But he did not fall into the fallacies of either crude collectivist or amoralist forms of utilitarianism. The "sense of final utility is always the final standard" (143) but our "utility" can be graded or categorised hierarchically according to our natures. We owe it to ourselves to pursue 'the best and the highest'" (144).

Of interest in this connection is Robertson's standpoint concerning natural rights. While such concepts were being rejected by the mainstream of philosophy and the academic world in general, his admittedly parenthetical digressions resembled the Aristotelian natural rights approach championed by most liberal philosophers today. The term, he said, has "a real content" and "a real use" in indicating the nature of reciprocity (145). As he explicated:

"Morality clearly rests equally on primary self-regarding instinct and on secondary sympathetic instinct ... The very sense of right rises in physical instinct, as we can see in the habits of animals; and this is the scientific justification of the term 'natural right', which covers all social arrangements that can be permanently harmonised with the first biological instinct and its social correlative, and marks off as invalid and deserving of abolition all other so-called rights set up by the legislation of either the majority or the minority". (146)

Rights are simply the generalisation of our own individual "self-preservation and self-assertion" to all identical entities; "duty" is simply "reciprocity" in observing these others' rights (147). The elaboration of an ethical egoism on Aristotelian, natural rights/natural law lines by such contemporary liberal rationalists as Ayn Rand, Tibor Machan, Eric Mack, Murray Rothbard and others incorporates these insights (148).

Robertson also presented an interpretation of emotion presaging the more detailed expositions of a number of (largely libertarian) contemporary philosophers and psychologists. He thus declared that "not only are ideas and emotions not antagonistic aspects of consciousness, but they are positively inconceivable apart". Normal emotion, in his view, "belongs to an idea". "Affect the perception, the idea, alter or modify or supersede that, and the emotion will take care of itself as surely as your shadow." He thus rejected the traditional assertion of anti-rationalists, conservative or collectivist, that reason is "cold" or "heartless", and human life of necessity irrational because of its emotional constituents. "The upward path for men lies by the



way of knowledge and reason - a path from which emotion is in nowise shut out, but in which it is ever more finely touched to finer issues" (150). It is a "motor force" which can be directed wisely or foolishly (150).

(ii) **Individualism Versus Collectivism**

Robertson's commitment to reason, to individual autonomy and to self-sovereignty dictated his attitude not merely to political collectivism and tyranny but to other anti-individualist forces. He rejected Fascism and nationalism not merely because of their factual claims, but also because of their moral character, their "reduction of the living individual to the status an atom in the non-moral state" and their implication that "men exist for the State and not the State for men" (151). The submission of the individual to "the collective pride and lust-to-power of the tribe", to the horrors of war and blind nationalism, were "due fruits of the persistence on the mediaeval path of 'vigorous government'" (152).

Similar reasoning underlies Robertson's rejection of sexual collectivism. "The spirit of individual self-assertion", he said, "is the stuff of spiritual equality" and is as desirable for women as for men. Walt Whitman's maxim of "Resist much, obey little" was his stated ideal. The relations of dominance and subservience existing between the sexes were blatantly at variance with "the indefeasible rights of personality as such" and are an inheritance from a time characterised by the "cruel clash of brute force, and ... mindless tyranny of naked strength" (153). Needless to say, he rejected claims (curiously reborn in the chauvinism and sexism of the contemporary socialist "feminist" movement) that women have a "mission" to "elevate" and "purify" politics. There was, he said:

"no 'mission' held in common by women any more than by men. Women oppose each other as men oppose each other. Nor is there any reason to look to them for any special show of political wisdom. When they

talk politics now they show much the same habits of mind as men; they fall into the same fallacies; they show the same sympathies, good and bad; the same philanthropy, the same snobberies, the same superstitions; the same insufficiency of logic and science. How should it be otherwise?". (154)

### (iii) Robertson's Concept of Reason

Joseph McCabe called Robertson "the most considerable figure in British rationalism after the death of Bradlaugh ... the recognized leader of the rationalist movement" (155). While I am not concerned here with Robertson's specific critique of Christianity and of religion generally, it is important to understand how he viewed reason, and to appreciate his conviction that the rule of reasoning in every aspect of life and behaviour, individual and social, was beneficent. Robertson lies in the radical rationalist and individualist tradition associated with the Levellers, the eighteenth-century Commonwealthmen, Paine, various natural rights/natural law philosophers, the *fin de siècle* individualists and, of course, modern libertarians such as Rand and Rothbard.

In the view of those committed to this tradition, including Robertson himself, the practice and exercise of reason liberate the individual from the constraints and injustices of society, politics and religion, all of which noticeably rely on anti-rational elements. As he put it:

"[R]ationalism, on the side of thought, must forever mean liberty, equality, fraternity, 'the giving and receiving of reasons', the complete reciprocity of judgment". (156).

Liberalism, it followed, was "a war of reason" and its adherents formed "a party of principle that shall know why it acts, and foresee its way" (157). He opposed all religions because they

rendered a "fictitious account of the world, and of human life" and hence "confuse men's ideas of right and wrong, and of wisdom and unwisdom". He explained:

"Every error on a great scale is so much hindrance to human happiness ... False beliefs on the great problems of thought are bound to spoil men's handling of the great problems of action ... I cannot conceive that the progress towards a better life for all mankind ... can ever be made to any great extent while men hold unreasonable and self-contradictory opinions about the government of the universe." (158)

Certain eminent thinkers might, he thought, be able to function adequately while adhering to rational thought in their specialist sphere and to nonsense in another; but he felt that, for the majority, "irrational opinions are just so much deadweight, so much rubbish in the wheels of the thinking machine, wasting its power and throwing it out of gear" (159). For him, rationalism constituted a moral duty to oneself - the ideal process of "making each day a conscious new beginning in the higher life". Progress and happiness in individual and social life are related dialectically: there is no social progress and improvement without individual progress and improvement, and vice versa-and such improvement is always an improvement of rationality:

"When we see that there is no other salvation for man than that which he can compass by his own thought, we shall surely rise to the height of that great argument, and seek in a new way to make a new world by being perpetually new men." (160)

Robertson's concept of reason has been attacked by Kaczkowski as "singularly unphilosophical" and "somewhat untraditional in approach" (161). Robertson in fact sums reason up as "only second thought against first thought: more precisely it is a careful plexus of our modes of knowledge and inference ... not a different function from primary thinking or believing". In other words:

"When ... in speaking of our mental processes, we lay special store by Reason, and claim to make that the guide of life, we are but proposing or claiming to live, in serious things, by our best thought, our checked and tested thought, as distinguished in degree or quality from our untested or ill-tested intuitions, prejudices or proclivities. This holds alike as to our ethics, our aesthetics, our science, our politics, and our philosophy. Our Reason, then, is just the generalisation of 'the best we can do' in the mental life, after taking all the mental pains we can." (162)

far from being unphilosophical this approach seems to me to be both perceptive and prescient of that of Sir Karl Popper (167). Indeed, Popper's view of science as proceeding by a process of "conjectures and refutations", based on insight and inspiration, is also presaged by Robertson's view of the role of unsupported ideas as tools of reasoning and discovery (164).

### **IX: Robertson's Liberalism: A Critical Assessment**

I have tried to show that Robertson was a productive and important thinker. That his political philosophy seems a "curious combination of the old and the new liberalism", as Kaczkowski puts it (165), is understandable in the light of the prevailing ignorance of the radical rationalist tradition in classical liberalism. His attempt to treat all subjects with objectivity and rational scrutiny, free from apriorism, dogmatism or fanaticism produced a body of thought that at first glance is not easy to classify. Nevertheless, as I have attempted to show, he adhered to traditional liberal individualist values and concerns, and his thought, unlike that of some so-called neo-liberals, remained quite distinct from socialism.

I have already indicated that my own interest in Robertson is not merely antiquarian. His radical rationalist and liberal approach is undergoing a revival. The issues he discussed are still, after all, the disputed political and economic questions of our time. What then can we

learn from him?

While I would concur with Professor Stanislaw Andreski's estimate of the favourable balance of "correctness" in his work, it does seem to me that there were frequent errors both in his reasoning and - as Andreski himself admits (165) - in his factual evidence. The correction of those errors and a more accurate knowledge of social and economic facts appears to me, however, to lead one inevitably to an appreciation of the libertarian and individualist strands in his thought, and to a rejection of the interventionist and socialist ones. Let us study the details.

For example, it is hard to reconcile Robertson's repeated attacks on capitalist endeavour with his implicitly individualist comments on natural rights and individual assertion. Moreover, production, trade and competition in the market place - i.e. in the absence of coercive force and special privilege - is hardly "rapine" or blind egoism. As he himself put it at one point, the ideal of industry is, after all, "the honest rendering of service for service" (167). It is difficult to grasp the meaning of his view that socialism represented some higher "reciprocity" than that of the free market. Indeed, it is frequently impossible to see, in the light of his observations on the reality of socialist experiments and the views of actual socialists, what socialism meant at all - other than a phrase denoting a desirable state of affairs (and who doesn't desire such a state!). One suspects too that in spite of his attempt to conceive of morality in rational terms, he was still dominated by the intellectual residue of traditional religious altruism and anti-individualism, with its rejection of individual self-assertion and self-interest (165).

Other ethical incoherencies are present. If one does not accept (as Robertson indeed did not) the labour theory of value, it is hard to see why "unearned increments" of any sort of property - land, capital or personal skills - should be subject to government confiscation, or why some sorts of labour (i.e. factory workers) should be favoured by state action above others (i.e. entrepreneurs) (169).

Robertson himself stressed "how important the factual error is" that "knowledge is the soil in

which judgment waxes, and ... every process of reasoning tends to be deepened and refined as it is based on a widened knowledge of the sum of things" (170). Among his own serious factual errors are his confident assertions about the superiority of state postal services and telegraphy, refuted by evidence available even at the time. Subsequent experience of these and other nationalised industries throughout the world has only reinforced this evidence (171). Robertson's naive belief that there was little danger that state employees could constitute a powerful interest group and combine against the public interest (172) needs little comment in an age of mass action, strikes and violence by myriad groups of state employees.

It also seems to me that Robertson did not observe the lessons of his own class analysis. He ignored the extent to which the problems and conditions of his time were the result of coercive class legislation, the many interventions both historical and contemporary, from which the market order was still struggling to free itself but for which it was ironically being blamed (173).

Moreover, in the light of both his contemporary and historical observations, one is amazed at Robertson's failure to realise that an extension of political machinery into social and economic life could only increase conflict and disruption, as different interest groups would struggle for control and for the benefits of interventionism. As he himself wrote after some direct Parliamentary observation of real life, "every operation of State finance in peace is a battle-ground of interests, all represented in the legislature" (174). His own earlier account, in **The Evolution of States**, of the extension of state power in the Roman Empire really should have warned him. He wrote there: "As the scope of the State increased from age to age, the patrician class found ready to its hand means of enrichment which yielded more return with much less trouble than was involved in commerce" (175).

Perhaps the major fallacy in Robertson's work is what has subsequently been described by Friedrich Hayek as 'scientism', the belief that scientific progress means an extension of an allegedly 'scientific control' to society as a whole - "the controlled and rational progressive

action of the whole community", as Robertson put it (176). Apart from the fact that such regulation in reality means the regulation of **some** people by **others** - something which Robertson's own methodological individualism should have alerted him to - it ignores the real nature of social existence. For in a market society a 'spontaneous order' emerges from uncoerced individual action. The spontaneous order of (relatively) free market societies has repeatedly shown itself to be more productive and harmonious than any type of imposed order (177). Robertson occasionally deplored what he called "waste". But this - when it is not merely a derogatory misnomer for consumer decisions which do not meet with someone else's approval - is merely the price of the process of adjustments that enable the free market to be so incredibly productive (178).

Scientism, then, is a profoundly unscientific doctrine, ignoring the true nature of the entities and processes for which it attempts to prescribe (179). There is no way that a scientific planner can make "exact calculations" - a phrase Robertson uses in his **The Meaning of Liberalism** - for the economy as a whole. This was pointed out by his contemporary, W. H. Mallock, although only worked out systematically by the "Austrian School" economists of the later twentieth century in the so-called "economic calculation" critique of socialism. The sort of information necessary for any would-be planner is simply not accessible to any one individual. The knowledge required is tacit knowledge, implicit in the multitude of decisions and evaluations of all individuals. Rational economic calculation is hence impossible under central economic planning (180).

As a great exponent of radical rationalism and liberalism, and as a significant sociologist, Robertson deserves to be rescued from an unjustified obscurity. That his thought was not without its ambiguities and errors is to say merely that he was as other men. And, as he put it himself, the only "safeguard against the risks of reasoning is just - more reasoning" (181). I find it hard to imagine that Robertson, were he alive, would not have fulfilled the intellectual duty he proclaimed, that of "perpetually revising and widening [one's] thought and ... knowledge, so forever reaching towards fresh enlightenment" (182). I like to think that he would

have joined those of us who today champion a more vigorous and systematic rationalist and radical libertarianism, shorn of any fatal residues of statism.

## NOTES

1. Kaczowski, Conrad J., **J. M. Robertson: Freethinker and Radical**, PhD Dissertation, St. Louis University, 1964, p. 583.
2. The fact that many statists and authoritarians might, in the manner of Hegel, label mystical and irrational doctrines as "reason" should not blind one to the real nature of these doctrines. That the varieties of dialectical and Marxist thought also pose as rational or scientific does not mean that irrationalism is merely a feature of 'right-wing' versions of collectivism, such as German National Socialism. See Peikoff, Leonard, **The Ominous Parallels**, New York, 1982, pp. 1, 45, 176; Idem, "Nazism Versus Reason", **The Objectivist** (New York), October 1969.
3. For an outline of the post-war revival of liberal and libertarian ideas, see "The New Enlightenment", in Seldon, Arthur, ed., **The 'New Right' Enlightenment**, Economic and Literary Books, Sevenoaks, Kent, 1985 and **The Bibliography of Freedom**, Centre for Policy Studies, London, 1980.
4. Andreski, Stanislav, "A Forgotten Genius: John Mackinnon Robertson (1856-1933)", **Question** (Rationalist Press Association, London,), No. 12; reprinted as "J. M. Robertson: The Historian and the Sociologist", Wells, G. A., ed., **J. M. Robertson (1856-1933): Liberal, Rationalist, Scholar**, Pemberton Publishing, London, 1987.



5. Kaczkowski, *op cit*, p. 583.
  
6. Marx himself commented that "no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes", "Letter to J. Weydemeyer", Marx, Karl, **The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte**, Progress Publishers, Moscow, n.d., p. 139. For a recent Marxist view of Scottish historical theory, see Meek, Ronald L., "The Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology", in Idem, **Economics and Ideology**, Chapman and Hall, London, 1967. For non-Marxist accounts see Forbes, Duncan, "Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce and Liberty", in Skinner, A. S. & Wilson, T., eds., **Essays on Adam Smith**, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967; Skinner, A. S., "Adam Smith: An Economic Interpretation of History", *Ibid*; Tame, Chris R., "Against the New Mercantilism: The Relevance of Adam Smith", **Il Politico: The Italian Journal of Political Science** (University of Pavia), 43(4), December 1978.
  
7. Quoted by Skinner, *op cit*, p. 153.
  
8. Millar, John, **The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks ...**, 3rd edn., 1779, reprinted in full in Lehmann, William C., **John Millar of Glasgow, 1735-1801: His Life and Thought and his Contributions to Sociological Analysis**, Cambridge University Press, 1960.
  
9. [1823-80]. See especially Rogers, James E. Thorold, **A History of Agriculture and Prices in England, From the Year After the Oxford Parliament (1259) to the Commencement of the Continental War (1793)**, 7 vols, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1866-1902; **A Manual of Political Economy For Schools & Colleges**, Clarendon

Press, Oxford, 1868; 2nd edn 1869; **Historical Gleanings: A Series of Sketches**, First Series, Macmillan, London, 1869; **Cobden and Modern Political Opinion: Essays on Certain Political Topics**, Macmillan, London, 1873; **Social Economy: A Series of Lessons for the Upper-Classes of Primary Schools**, London, 1871/without subtitle, Questions of the Day 23, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, rev edn. 1874; **Six Centuries of Work and Wages: The History of English Labour**, Swan Sonnenschein, London, 1884; **The British Citizen: His Rights and Privileges, A Short History**, SPCK, London, 1885; **The Economic Interpretation of History**, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1888; **The Relation of Economic Science to Social & Political Action**, Swan Sonnenschein, London, 1888. For a brief contemporary evaluation (although in my view a misleading one) see Coates, A. W., "James E. Thorold Rogers", in Sills, David L., ed., **The International Encyclopaedia of Social Science**, Macmillan, London, 1968, pp. 542-543. Also see Kadish, Alon (1989), "The Righteous Wrath of James E. Thorold Rogers", Idem, **Historians, Economists and Economic History**, Routledge, London, 1989.

The same pattern of development occurred in French liberalism. Much of the work of such leading classical economists as Frederic Bastiat and Destut de Tracy was class analysis rather than economics proper. See Bastiat, Frederic, **Harmonies of Political Economy**, Edinburgh, nd; Idem, **Selected Essays on Political Economy**, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1964/Foundation for Economic Education, Irvington on Hudson, New York, 1968; Tracy, Destut de, **A Treatise on Political Economy ...**, Joseph Milligan, Georgetown, 1817; reprinted under the title **Psychology of Political Science, With Special Consideration of the Political Acumen of Destut de Tracy**, (Dorsey, John M., ed.), Centre for Heath Education, Detroit, 1973.

Another major French exponent of liberal class analysis was Charles Comte,

whose **Traite de Legislation** (1826) Robertson called "excellent" in **Buckle and His Critics: A Study in Sociology**, Swan Sonnenschein, London, 1895, p. 8. He referred to it frequently and believed that it was a major influence on Buckle - see **Ibid**, p. 444). Charles Comte worked closely with another leading liberal, Charles Dunoyer, in elaborating liberal class theory. In their doctrine of "industrialism", the real class conflict was seen as being between all **productive** interests (businessmen, bankers, artisans etc) and those who used **predation** and state power to enrich themselves. Typically, neither Comte nor Dunoyer has been translated into English, and it was Auguste Comte (no relation) and Saint-Simon - with whom they were for a time associated - who rose to fame partly on a statist distortion of their views. For accounts of their work see Liggio, Leonard P., "Charles Dunoyer and French Classical Liberalism", **The Journal of Libertarian Studies** (New York), 1(3), Summer 1977; Raico, Ralph, "Classical Liberal Exploitation Theory: A Comment on Professor Liggio's Paper", **The Journal of Libertarian Studies**, 1(3), Summer 1977; Hart, David, M., "Gustave de Molinari and the Anti-Statist Liberal Tradition, Part 1", **The Journal of Libertarian Studies**, 5(3), Summer 1981. The only present-day sociologist to acknowledge Charles Comte's importance is Stanislav Andreski; see his **The African Predicament: A Study in the Pathology of Modernization**, Michael Joseph, London/Atherton Press, New York, 1968, p.33; Idem, **Parasitism and Subversion: The Case of Latin America**, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1966/Schocken Books, New York, 1969, pp. 12-13; and Idem, **Elements of Comparative Sociology**, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964, pp. 246-7.

10. See his references to Millar and to Adam Ferguson (another Scottish Enlightenment thinker) in **Voltaire**, Life-Stories of Famous Men, Watts, London, 1922, p. 87 and **Courses of Study**, Watts, London, 1904; 2nd edn 1908, 3rd edn 1932, p. 348. He also refers to "a whole school of sociology in Scotland. Hume, Adam Smith, Ferguson, Millar, Dunbar, Kames are the variously serviceable beginners in Britain of the study

of human evolution which was taken up in the next age by Comte, Maine and Spencer, all of whom might have been better sociologists had they duly studied their predecessors", **Bolingbroke and Walpole**, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1919, p. 254.

11. **A Short History of Christianity**, Watts, London, 1902; 2nd edn 1913; Thinkers Library No. 24, 3rd edn, 1931, p. 339.
12. **Buckle and His Critics**, *op cit*.
13. "Introduction", Buckle, H. T., **Introduction to the History of Civilization in England**, George Routledge, London, 1904
14. **An Introduction to English Politics**, Grant Richards, London, 1900, pp. x-xi, 67.
15. **The Evolution of States: An Introduction to English Politics**, Watts, London, 1912, pp. vii-viii; "Introduction" to Buckle, *op cit*, p. ix. The former work was a much expanded edition of his **Introduction to English Politics**.
16. **The Evolution of States**, *op cit*, p. viii.
17. **Ibid**, pp., 2f.
18. **Ibid**, p., 70. He added, as further explanation, that since men are "proximately ruled by their passions or emotions", the supremacy of the economic factor "consists in its being, for the majority, the most permanent director or stimulant of feeling", pp. 71-2. Elsewhere he explicated that "it will not do to say that the method of 'economic determinism', as it is called, is the whole of sociological interpretation. No one key will open all the locks of the human heart. The trouble about all methods is that they tend to make methodists. But if you are the master of your method, and not its

servant, it may avail you for much", **Essays in Ethics**, 1903, p. 58. For other applications by Robertson of his method see, for example, **Bolingbroke and Walpole, op cit**, pp. 21, 23 (on the complexity of motivation and conflict in religious development) and **A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century**, Watts, 2 vols, Watts, London, 2 vols, 1929, p. 365 (on the economic basis of priestly power).

19. **The Evolution of States, op cit**, p. ix.

20. **Ibid**, p.63. See also his comments on psychological factors in **Buckle and His Critics, op cit**, pp. 260, 290. He observes in the same book that one has to recognise that "there are other forms of determinism than the economic, though the economic may be classed as one of the most fundamental", p. 496.

21. **The Evolution of States, op cit**, p. 29.

22. **Ibid**, p. 1.

23. **Ibid**, p. 6.

24. **Ibid**, p. 18.

25. **Ibid**, p. 20.

26. **Ibid**, p. 15.

27. **Ibid**, p. 405.

28. **Buckle and His Critics, op cit**, pp. 433-4.

29. **An Introduction to English Politics, op cit, pp. x-xi.**
30. **A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century, op cit, p. 343.**
31. **Ibid, p. 346.**
32. **Ibid, p. 346.**
33. **Buckle and His Critics, op cit, pp. 8, 432-3, 496.**
34. **The Evolution of States, op cit, p. 179.**
35. "Free Trade", Cecil, Rt. Hon. Lord Robert et al, **Essays in Liberalism: Being the Lectures Which Were Delivered at the Liberal Summer School at Oxford, 1923**, W. Collins Son, London, 1922/Books for Libraries, Freeport, Washington, 1968 , pp. 74-91 , p. 91. For longer expositions of Robertson's free trade views see: **The Case for Free Trade**, A. & H. Bradlaugh Bonner, London, 1904; **Full Verbatim Report of the Fiscal Debate, Protection v. Free Trade, Mr. Samuel Storey v. Mr. J. M. Robertson ...**, Andrew Reid, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1905; **Trade & Tariffs**, Adam & Charles Black, London, 1908; **The Great Question: Free Trade or Tariff Reform?**, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, London, 1909; **The Tariff Swindle**, Cobden Club/Cassell, London, 1911 1911; **The Collapse of 'Tariff Reform': Mr. Chamberlain's Case Exposed**, Cobden Club/Cassell & Co., London, 1911; **The New Tariffism**, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1918; **Free Trade**, J. M. Dent, London, 1919; **The Battle for Free Trade**, Cobden Club/Cassell, London, 1923; **The Political Economy of Free Trade**, P. S. King, London, 1928; **Fiscal Fraud and Folly: A Study of the Propaganda of 'Empire Free Trade' and Other Programmes**, British Periodicals, London, nd (1913).

36. **Fiscal Fraud and Folly**, *op cit*, pp. 64-68.
37. **Ibid**, p. 110. And see also **The Meaning of Liberalism**, Methuen, London, 1912; 2nd edn. 1925 , p. 99.
38. "The Sociology of Race", **The Sociological Review**, 4, 1911, p. 130.
39. **The Germans**, Williams & Norgate, London, 1916, p. 67.
40. **The Saxon and the Celt: A Study in Sociology**, University Press, London, 1897.
41. **Buckle and His Critics**, *op cit*, pp. 121, 150, 418, 454.
42. **The Meaning of Liberalism**, *op cit*, p. 226.
43. Kaczkowski, *op cit*, p. 226.
44. Silberner, Edmund, **The Problem of War in Nineteenth Century Economic Thought**, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1957/Garland Library of War & Peace, Garland Publishing, New York, 1972
45. Hirst, Francis W., ed., **Free Trade & Other Fundamental Doctrines of the Manchester School, Set Forth in Selections From the Speeches and Writings of Its Founders and Followers**, Harper & Brothers, London, 1903/Augustus M. Kelley, New York, 1968
46. **Buckle and His Critics**, *op cit*, p. 275.
47. Socialist scholars have succeeded in creating an image of liberalism generally

and Spencerean "Social Darwinism" in particular as a system endorsing "nature red in tooth and claw", and hence endorsing militarism, imperialism, and aggressive nationalism. Nothing could be further from the truth. A key distinction in Spencer's sociology - continuing earlier themes of liberal thought - is between the "militant" society of the past and the new order of productive and peaceful capitalist industrialism. For a brief example see his "Re-Barbarisation", **Facts and Fancies**, Williams and Norgate, London, 1907, pp. 122-133., also reprinted in Andreski, Stanislav, **Herbert Spencer: Structure, Function and Evolution**, Michael Joseph, London, 1971, pp. 207-212. Alfred W. Tillet, an ardent Spencer disciple, wrote a work specifically on this topic, **Militancy Versus Civilisation: An Introduction to, and Epitome of, the Teachings of Herbert Spencer Concerning Permanent Peace as the First Condition of Progress**, P. S. King, London, 1915. A modern discussion of Spencer's thought on this issue can be found in Peel, J. Y. D., "Militancy and Industrialism", Idem, **Herbert Spencer: The Evolution of His Thought**, Heinemann, London, 1971, pp. 192-223. Andreski also discusses the relevance of Spencer's distinctions in his **Military Organisation and Society**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984.

The great Belgium liberal Molinari's views are described in Hart, David "Gustav de Molinari and the Anti-Statist Liberal Tradition", **Journal of Libertarian Studies**, 2 parts, V(3), Summer 1981, pp. 263-290; V(4), Fall 1981, pp. 399-434; VI(1), Winter 1982, pp. 83-104.

Only two of the many works of French Spencerean Jacques Novicow (1849-1912) have been published in English: **Mechanisme et Limites de L'Association Humaine**, Paris, 1912, as "The Mechanism and Limits of Human Association: The Foundations of a Sociology of Peace", **American Journal of Sociology**, XXIII(3), November 1917 and **La Guerre et ses Pretendus Bienfaits**, 1894, as **War and Its Alleged Benefits**, William Heinemann, London, 1912. Amongst his major French works are:



**La Politique Internationale**, Paris, 1886; **Les Lutttes Contre Societes Humaines**, Paris, 1893; **Les Lutttes Entre Societes Humaines et Leurs Phases Successives**, 1893; **La Critique du Darwinisme Social**, Paris, 1910.

48. Angel's most famous and definitive statement of his views can be found, of course, in his **The Great Illusion: The Relation of Military Power to National Advantage**, William Heinemann, London, 1909/Putnam, New York, 1911, although he wrote voluminous (and somewhat repetitive) other works. A good analysis and bibliography can be found in Miller, J. D. B., **Norman Angell and the Futility of War: Peace & the Public Mind**, Macmillan, London, 1986.
49. "Superstitions of Militarism", Idem et al, **Essays Towards Peace**, Rationalist Peace Society/Watts, London, 1913.
50. Kaczkowski, **op cit**, pp. 440, 495-496.
51. With Bonner, Hypatia Bradlaugh, "The Rationalist Peace Society: A Letter to Members and Friends", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 236, 1 February, 1916, p. 28. And see also Bonner, Arthur, and Bonner, Charles Bradlaugh, **Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner: The Story of Her Life**, London, 1942, pp. 90-97 on the Rationalist Peace Society.
52. Kaczkowski, **op cit**, pp. 407-8.
53. "Empire: A Sociological Outline", **The Reformer**, 7, New Series 5, No. 49, 15 January 1903, pp. 15, 20.
54. **Ibid**, p. 20.

55. "Is There a Liberal Jingoism", **The Reformer**, 3, New Series 1, No. 4, 15 April 1899, pp. 202.
56. **Patriotism and Empire**, Grant Richardson, London, 1899; 3rd edn, 1900, pp. 140-1, 178, 183, 187.
57. "Sociological Notes", **The Reformer**, 2, New Series 1, No. 1, 15 January 1899. On methodological individualism, see Mises, Ludwig von, **Human Action: A Treatise on Economics**, William Hodge, London, 1949. pp. 41-4, and the essays pro- and con in O'Neill, John, ed., **Modes of Individualism and Collectivism**, Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1973, especially those by Friedrich Hayek and J. W. N. Watkins.
58. Page, Martin, **Britain's Unknown Genius: An Introduction to the Life-Work of John Mackinnon Robertson**, South Place Ethical Society, London, 1984, p. 18.
59. Quoted in **Ibid**, p. 55.
60. Hobson, John A., **Confessions of an Economic Heretic**, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1938, p. 51.
61. Kaczkowski, **op cit**, pp. 60-61, 68.
62. "Socialism and Women", **The Reformer**, 5, New Series 3, No. 36, 15 December 1901.
63. "Memoir", Bradlaugh, Charles, **Labour and Law**, R. Forder, London, 1891/Augustus M. Kelley, New York, 1972, p. lxi.

64. "Cobden Club Ethics", **The National Reformer**, New Series, 52, No. 11, 9 September 1888.
65. "Freethought in Japan", **The Reformer**, New Series 3, 5, No. 32, 15 August 1901.
66. **Modern Humanists: Sociological Studies of Carlyle, Mill, Emerson, Arnold, Ruskin and Spencer. With an Epilogue on Social Reconstruction**, Swan Sonnenschein, London/Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1891/Kennikat Press, Port Washington, 1968, p. 190.
67. **Explorations**, Rationalist Press Association, Watts, London, nd (1923), p. 137.
68. "Sociological Notes", **op cit**, p. 42.
69. **Modern Humanists**, **op cit**, p. 51.
70. **Ibid**, p. 28.
71. **Essays in Ethics**, **op cit**, p. 213.
72. **Modern Humanists**, **op cit**, p. 245.
73. **The Meaning of Liberalism**, **op cit**, p. 39.
74. Hayek, Friedrich, **The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason** Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1952. And see my critical comments in this essay, Section 9, above.

75. **Buckle and His Critics**, *op cit*, pp. 504-13.
76. **In Modern Humanists**, *op cit*, pp. 262, 266.
77. **Ibid**, p. 234.
78. "Free Life", **The National Reformer**, New Series, 57, No. 24, 14 June 1891.  
 Although it should also be noted that in a response to a further essay by Herbert, on religion - "Assuming the Foundations", **The Nineteenth Century**, September 1901 - Robertson declared Herbert to be "one of the most honourable and honest of controversialists"; (15 October 1901), "Egotism Versus Atheism", **The Free Review**, ns, No. 34, p. 589.
79. Herbert's major works were: **A Politician In Trouble About His Soul**, Chapman & Hall, London, 1884; **The Right & Wrong of Compulsion by the State: A Statement of the Moral Principles of the Party of Individual Liberty, & the Political Measures Founded Upon Them**, Anti-Force paper No. 2, Williams & Norgate, London, 1885; **The Voluntarist Creed, ... and A Plea for Voluntarism**, W. J. Simpson, Oxford University Press, 1908; ed., **The Sacrifice of Education to Examination: Letters From All Sorts & Conditions of Men**, Williams & Norgate, London, 1889; & Wager, Harold, **Bad Air & Bad Health**, Williams & Norgate, London, 1894; & Levy, J. H., **Taxation & Anarchism: A Discussion Between the Hon. Auberon Herbert & J. H. Levy**, Personal Rights Association, London, 1912. A recent anthology of his work has been edited by Eric Mack: **The Right and Wrong of Compulsion By the State, and Other Essays** (Mack, Eric, ed.), Liberty Press/Liberty Classics, Indianapolis, 1978. There is a rather inadequate biography by S. Hutchinson Harris, **Auberon Herbert: Crusader For Liberty**, London, 1943, and see my own brief essay, "Auberon Herbert", **Free Life: A Journal of Classical Liberal and**

**Libertarian Thought** (Libertarian Alliance, London), 1(2), Spring 1980.

80. Robertson characterised Levy's work as of "exceptional competence, his knowledge being as exact as his method, and his style of a high finish"?and cited Professor Bain's praise of Levy's "acute and brilliant dialectic", **A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century**, *op cit*, p. 300.
81. Levy [1838-1913] contributed to **The Reformer** under the pen-name 'D', for example, in the article "Anarchists and Socialists", 2(6), February 5, 1898. Examples of his contributions to **The National Reformer** are: "Anarchists and Socialists", **The National Reformer**, LI(6), 5 February 1888, pp. 1-2 and "The Liberty and Property Defence League", 51(14), April 1, 1888, pp. 210-11. His major works were: (26 August 1887), "Anarchy or Individualism", **Jus**, p. 10; (1873), "His Work in Philosophy", Herbert Spencer et al, **John Stuart Mill: His Life and Works**, Henry Holt, London, pp. 55-61; **The Outcome of Individualism**, P. S. King, London, 1890; 3rd edn, Freethought Publishing, London, 1892; **Short Studies in Economic Subjects**, Personal Rights Series No. 1, Personal Rights Association, P. S. King, London, 1903; **The Remuneration of Labour**, Personal Rights Association, London, 1894; **Socialism and Individualism**, Personal Rights Association, London, 1904; ed., **A Symposium on Value**, P. S. King, London, 1895; ed., **The Necessity For Criminal Appeal, as Illustrated by the Maybrick Case and the Jurisprudence of Various Countries**, P. S. King, London, 1899; ed., **Transactions of the National Liberal Club Political Economy Circle**, Vol. I, P. S. King, London, 1891; ed., **Transactions of the National Liberal Club Political & Economic Circle**, Vol. III, P. S. King, London, 1901; ed., **The Fiscal Question in Great Britain**, National Liberal Club Political & Economic Circle, Transactions, V(1), P. S. King, London, 1904;

82. Donisthorpe, Wordsworth, "Freedom and Marriage", **The National Reformer**, 59(1), 3 January 1892.
83. His major works are: **The Claims of Labour; or Serfdom, Wagedom and Freedom**, Tinsley, London, 1880; **Socialism and Individualism**, London, 1883; **Labour Capitalization**, G. Harmsworth/Liberty & Property Defence League, London, 1887; **Love and Law: An Essay on Marriage**, W. Reeves, London, nd (1893/1894); **Law in a Free State**, Macmillan, London, 1895; **Individualism: A System of Politics**, Macmillan, London, 1889; **Principles of Plutology**, Williams & Norgate, London, 1876.
84. Among the essays of anarchist tendency (or discussing this tendency) published by Robertson as editor of **The Free Review** were those by the following writers: J. T. Hull and Frederick Rockell, 9, October 1, 1897 and February 1, 1898; Orford Northcote, 1(7), January 1, 1897); William Platt, 10, April 1, 1898; and R. de Villiers, 10, May 1, 1898. John Armsden advocated unregulated private enterprise banking in Vol. 2, August 1, 1894 and argued his views with Robertson in letters in Vol. 4, September 1, 1895. There were also papers by F. H. Perry Coste, J. Greeve Fisher (a vigorous advocate of hard money and free banking, Thomas Common (some of these appearing in the **National Reformer**). Good accounts of these authors and the broader classical liberal, libertarian and individualist anarchist movement of the time can be found in: Watner, Carl, "'The English Individualists as They Appear in 'Liberty', **The Journal of Libertarian Studies**, 6(1), Winter 1982, pp. 59-82, reprinted in Coughlin, Michael E., Hamilton, Charles and Sullivan, Mark A., eds., **Benjamin R. Tucker and the Champions of 'Liberty'**, M. E. Coughlin & M. Sullivan, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1987; Soldon, Norbert C., **Laissez Faire on the Defensive: The Story of the Liberty and Property Defense League, 1882-1914**, PhD dissertation, University of Delaware, 1969; Bristow, Edward Jay,

**The Defence of Liberty and Property in Britain, 1880-1914**, PhD dissertation,  
Yale University, 1970.

85. "Free Life", **op cit**, p. 370.
86. Kaczkowski, **op cit**, p. 24.
87. "Herbert Spencer", in **Explorations**, **op cit**, p. 115.
88. "Herbert Spencer", in **Modern Humanists**, **op cit**, pp. 234, 240.
89. "John Stuart Mill", **Ibid**, pp. 110-111.
90. "Mandeville's 'Fable of the Bees'", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 346,  
April 1925, p. 73.
91. **Bolingbroke and Walpole**, **op cit**, p. 234.
92. **The Meaning of Liberalism**, **op cit**, p. 64; **Buckle and His Critics**,  
**op cit**, p. 377.
93. **Fiscal Fraud and Folly**, **op cit**, p. 134.
9. **Ibid**, p. 129.
95. **Ibid**, pp. 146-7.
96. **Ibid**, p. 132.

97. **Ibid**, pp. 136, 137.
98. **The Decadence: An Excerpt from 'A History of the Triumph and the Decay of England'**. Dateable 1949, Watts, London, 1929, pp. 44, 107.
99. **Ibid**, p. 55.
100. **Ibid**, pp. 57-8.
101. **Ibid**, pp. 46-7, 58.
102. **Ibid**, p. 56.
103. **Ibid**, p. 57.
104. **Ibid**, p. 60.
105. **Ibid**, pp. 34-5, 49.
106. **Ibid**, p. 24.
107. **Ibid**, pp. 51, 48.
108. **The Dynamics of Religion: An Essay in English Culture History**, Watts, London, 1897; 2nd edn, 1926, p. 293. And see also his "Notes and Queries About 'Scientific Humanism'", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 424, October 1932.



109. **The Dynamics of Religion**, *op cit*, p. ix.
110. "Notes and Queries", *op cit*, pp. 5-8.
111. "Democracy and Religion", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 427, p. 3.
112. "Utopia", **Spoken Essays**, Watts, London, 1925, pp. 7, 15.
113. **Mr. Lloyd George and Liberalism**, Chapman and Dodd, London, 1923,  
pp. 30-31, 36.
114. **Charles Bradlaugh**, Life-Stories of Famous Men, Watts, London,  
1920, p. 104.
115. "An Account of His Parliamentary Struggle, Politics & Teachings",  
Bonner, Hypatia Bradlaugh, **Charles Bradlaugh: A Record of His  
Life & Work**, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 7th edn, 1908, p. 198.
116. **Mr. Lloyd George and Liberalism**, *op cit*, pp. 31-33, 95.
117. **The Meaning of Liberalism**, *op cit*, pp. 180-1.
118. **The Economics of Progress**, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1918, p. 92.
119. **Essays in Sociology**, Vol. 1, A. & H. Bradlaugh Bonner, London,  
1904, pp. 35, i, 13-14.
120. **The Blood Tax**, Papers for the People, No. 4, Truth Seeker,  
Bradford, nd (c1890s), p. 6.

121. **War and Civilisation: An Open Letter to a Swedish Professor**  
 [Dr. Gustaf F. Steffen], George Allen & Unwin, London, 1916; 2nd edn 1917, p. 55.
122. **The Germans, op cit**, pp. 43, 244-5.
123. **War and Civilisation, op cit**, p. 55.
124. Robbins, Lionel, **The Theory of Economic Policy in English Classical Political Economy**, Macmillan, London, 1952.
125. On neo-liberalism see Clarke, Peter, **Liberals and Social Democrats**, Cambridge University Press, 1978; Emy, H. V., **Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, 1892-1924**, Cambridge University Press, 1973; Freedon, Michael. S., **The New Liberalism**, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978; Harvie, Christopher, **The Lights of Liberalism: University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy, 1860-66**, Allan Lane, London, 1976.
126. **The Meaning of Liberalism, op cit**, pp. 27-28.
127. **The Fallacy of Saving: A Study in Economics**, Swan Sonnenschein, London/Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1892
128. "Foreword", Whittaker, Thomas, **The Liberal State: An Essay in Political Philosophy**, Watts, London, 1907; 2nd edn, 1928.  
 Elsewhere Whittaker himself clearly states his support for liberty both as "an end in itself" and as a precondition for the attainment of other desirable ends. See Whittaker, Thomas, "The Need of Liberty", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 316,

October 1922, pp. 155-6. See also his "Sociolatry", **Rationalist Annual**, 1929, pp. 75-80.

129. "Contaminated Ideals", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 439, January 1933, p. 5.
130. **A Short History of Morals**, Watts, London, 1920, p. 430.
131. Kaczkowski, **op cit**, p. 575.
132. **The Eight Hours Question: A Study in Economics**, Swan Sonnenschein, London/Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1893
133. **Ibid**, pp. 1189, 150.
134. **The Fallacy of Saving**, **op cit**.
135. Andreski, "A Forgotten Genius", **op cit.**, p. 68.
136. Keynes mentions Robertson's **The Fallacy of Saving** in a footnote in his **The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money**, Macmillan, London, 1936, p. 365. For a detailed account of his indebtedness to Robertson see Page, Martin, **Britain's Unknown Genius**, **op cit**, pp. 26-7. For thorough demolitions of Keynes and other similar inflationist doctrines, see Hazlitt, Henry, **The Failure of the "New Economics"** D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1959/Arlington House, New Rochelle, New York, 1973/University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 1983; ed., **The Critics of Keynesian Economics**, D. Van Nostrand,

Princeton, New Jersey, 1960/Arlington House, New Rochelle, New York, 1977; 2nd edn, 1979/University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 1983

137. **The Economics of Progress, op cit, p. 98.**
138. See Hake, A. Egmont and Wesslau, O. E., **Free Trade in Capital; or, Free Competition in the Supply of Capital to Labour, and Its Bearings on the Political and Social Questions of the Day**, Remington, London, 1890 and **The Coming Individualism**, Archibald Constable, London, 1895/Macmillan, New York, 1896. By himself Hake was also the author of **Regeneration: A Reply to Max Nordau**, Archibald Constable, London, 1895 and **The Unemployed Problem Solved**, Hatchards, London, 1888
139. **The Economics of Progress, op cit, pp. 111-112, 114, 180.**
140. Significant and representative exponents of such "anti-economic" anthropology are Polanyi, Karl, et al., **Trade and Market in the Early Empires**, New York, 1957 and Sahlins, Marshall D., **Stone Age Economics**, Aldine-Atherton, Chicago, 1972/Tavistock Press, London, 1974; Helm, June et al, eds., **Essays in Economic Anthropology: Delivered in the Memory of Karl Polanyi**, American Ethnological Society, Seattle, 1965/AMS Press, New York, 1968. For a brief critique, see Mises, Ludwig von, **Epistemological Problems of Economics** [1933 in German], D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1960/New York University Press & Institute for Humane Studies, Menlo Park, California, 1981, pp. 58-66. For other criticisms see Goodfellow, D. M., **Principles of Economic Sociology: The Economics of Primitive Life as Illustrated from**

**the Bantu Peoples of South & East Africa**, George Routledge & Sons, London, 1939 and Schneider, Harold K., **Economic Man: The Anthropology of Economics**, The Free Press/Macmillan, New York, 1974; Firth, Raymond, "Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies: A Viewpoint from Economic Anthropology", Firth, Raymond & Yamey, Basil S., eds., **Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies: Studies From Asia, Oceania, the Caribbean and American Areas**, George Allen and Unwin, London, pp. 15-34; Yamey, Basil S., "The Study of Peasant Economic Systems: Some Concluding Comments and Questions", **Ibid**, pp. 376-386

141. "Rational Anthropology", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 405, March 1930. p. 157.

142. **Letters on Reasoning**, Watts, London, 1902; 2nd edn, 1905; Abridged edn, Thinkers Library No. 50, nd (1935?).

143. **Essays in Ethics**, **op cit**, pp. 52f.

144. **Ibid**, p. 40.

145. "The History of Free Speech", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 207, 1 September 1913, p. 134.

146. **Essays in Ethics**, **op cit**, p. 91.

147. **Ibid**, p. 204.

148. See Rand, Ayn, **The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism**, New American Library, New York, 1965; Machan, Tibor,

**Human Rights and Human Liberties**, Nelson-Hall, Chicago, 1975;  
 Idem, "Recent Work in Ethical Egoism", **American Philosophical Quarterly**, 16(1), January 1979; Idem, "Some Recent Work in Human Rights Theory", **American Philosophical Quarterly**, 17(2), April 1980; "A Reconsideration of Natural Rights Theory", **American Philosophical Quarterly**, 19(1), January 1982;  
 Mack, Eric "How to Derive Ethical Egoism", **The Personalist** (School of Philosophy, University of Southern California), 52(4), Autumn 1971; Idem, "Egoism and Rights", **The Personalist**, Winter 1973.

149. **Essays in Ethics, op cit**, pp. 186, 190, 196.

150. **Ibid**, p. 190. This view of the nature of emotions is thus explored in far greater detail by Branden, Nathaniel, **The Psychology of Self Esteem**, Nash Publishing, Los Angeles, 1969/Bantam Books, New York, 1971, pp. 64-94 and Breggin, Peter R., **The Psychology of Freedom: Liberty & Love as a Way of Life**, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York, 1980, pp. 43-52.

Such contemporary writers frequently draw on the seminal work of the Thomistic philosopher Magda Arnold, in her **Emotion and Personality**, 2 vols., Columbia University Press, 1960; Vol. 1: Psychological Aspects; Vol. 2: Neurological & Physiological Aspects.

151. **The Germans, op cit**, pp. 205, 244.

152. **Ibid**, pp. 205, 251.

153. **Essays in Ethics, op cit**, pp. 155, 167-8.

154. **The Vote for Women**, Papers for the People, No. 7, Truth Seeker, Bradford, nd (c1890s), p. 8.
155. Kaczkowski, **op cit**, p. 583.
156. **Rationalism**, Constable, London, 1912, p. 81.
157. **Godism**, Papers for the People, No. 3, Truth Seeker, Bradford, nd (c1890s), p. 2.
158. **Ibid**, p. 2.
159. **Ibid**, p. 3.
160. **Essays in Ethics**, **op cit**, p. 53.
161. Kaczkowski, **op cit**, pp. 76-7.
162. **Spoken Essays**, **op cit**, p. 187. And also see Robertson's two different essays both entitled "The Meaning of Reason", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 356, February 1926 and No. 385, July 1928, as well as **Essays Towards a Critical Method**, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1889, p. 53.
163. See especially Popper, Karl, **The Logic of Scientific Discovery**, Hutchinson, London, 1959/Harper & Row, New York, 1968; **Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Discovery**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1963, 1969/Basic Books, New York, 1963/Harper & Row, New York, 1968; **Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach**,

Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972/4th edn., Routledge, London, 1992;

**Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography**, Open Court,

LaSalle, Illinois/Fontana/Collins, London, 1976/Routledge, London, 1992.

164. See "Bacon", **Pioneer Humanists**, Watts, London, 1907, p. 92. Robertson's refutation of attempts to deny objective reality and causality in **Explorations**, *op cit*, pp. 157-8 and his critique of logomachy and the "artificial maze of phrases" in **Letters on Reasoning**, *op cit*, p. 124 are also similar to the approach of Ayn Rand and other contemporary libertarian exponents of methodological individualism.
165. Kaczkowski, *op cit*, p. 602.
166. Andreski, *op cit*, p. ?
167. **Patriotism and Empire**, *op cit*, pp. 170-1.
168. In **The Meaning of Liberalism**, *op cit*, he seems to believe that "the highest of social ideals" is ultimately that of a pure altruism, of the form: "From each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs", p.153. But this represents the ultimate in **parasitism** rather than reciprocity! See Rand, Ayn, **For the New Intellectual**, New American Library, New York, 1963, especially pp. 111-113, for a devastating refutation of this alleged moral ideal.
169. In **Saving and Waste**, Papers for the People, No. 5, Truth Seeker, Bradford, nd (1896) Robertson argued that the entrepreneur fulfilled no productive role, whereas in **The Meaning of Liberalism**, *op cit*, in 1912 he said that the entrepreneur was "as necessary a factor in



industry as the 'hands'", p. 248.

170. **Letters on Reasoning, op cit**, pp. 21, 46.
171. In **Railway Nationalisation**, Papers for the People, No. 11, Truth Seeker, Bradford, nd (c1890s), Robertson "felt that" the Post Office was run better by the state than by private enterprise, p.3. But in both Britain and America it was well documented even in his time that the Post Office had a horrendous record of bad service and obstinate resistance to progress. Cheaper and more efficient private carriers were repeatedly legislated out of existence. Thus see White, James Dundas, **Economic Ideals**, Francis Riddell Henderson, London, 1903, pp. 50-61; Spencer, Herbert, **Social Statics: The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified, & the First of Them Developed**, Williams & Norgate, London, 1851/D. Appleton, New York, 1851/Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, New York, 1954/Augustus M. Kelley, New York, 1969, pp. 360-2); Millar, Frederick, "The Evils of State Trading as Illustrated by the Post Office", Mackay, Thomas, ed., **A Plea for Liberty**, D. Appleton, New York, 1891/Liberty Classics, Liberty Press, Indianapolis, 1981, pp. 305-325; Robertson could have consulted Porter, Robert P., **The Dangers of Municipal Trading**, George Routledge & Sons, London, 1907, especially pp. 232-257 on telephones and pp. 285-309 on railways. Robertson's views on the desirability of railway nationalisation find ample refutation in Cox, Harold, **The Failure of State Railways**, Longmans, Green, London, 1924. Many general critiques of socialism were also available to him, such as: Richter, Eugen, Richter, Eugene, **Profiles of the Socialistic Future** (1893), Swan Sonnenschein, London, 3rd edn 1907/Jarrolds, London, 1925; Strachey, J. St. Loe, **The Problems & Perils of Socialism: Letters to a Working Man**, Macmillan, London, 1908 ; and O'Brian, M. D., **Socialism Tested By Facts, Being An Account of Certain Experimental Attempts**

to Carry Out Socialistic Principles, and Containing a Criticism of  
'Looking Backward' and the 'Fabian Essays', Liberty & Property Defence  
League, London, 1892 amongst many others.

172. **Railway Nationalisation**, *op cit*, p. 6.

173. This was a major concern of Thorold Rogers' work. He attempted to "trace the historical causes of this painful spectacle [ie., contemporary economic problems] ... to discover whether or not persistent wrong doing has not been the dominant cause of English pauperism", **The Economic Interpretation of History**, *op cit*, p. vii). That "wrong doing", in his view, was centuries of state interventionism in behest of special privilege. This was also the burden of much of the work of such classical liberals as William Graham Sumner in America and Vilfredo Pareto in Italy, which was accessible to Robertson.

174. **The Economics of Progress**, *op cit*, p. 181.

175. **The Evolution of States**, *op cit*, p. 77. Instead of realising the force of this comment, Robertson felt instead that the valid laissez-faire objections to mediaevalist and mercantilist interventionism, which was "usually motivated by class interest and operated to that end", substantially disappeared "before a system of state interference democratically motivated and scientifically planned with an eye not to the enrichment of classes but to the well-being of the entire community", **The Meaning of Liberalism**, *op cit*, p. 55. Although he still conceded (citing some German examples) that contemporary interventions could also be irrational, chaotic or detrimental, he seemed to feel that a sufficiently enlightened and aware "collective consciousness", **Modern Humanists**, *op cit*, p. 253, and a "multiplicity of criticism" would constitute the "true safeguard against legislative miscarriages", **Essays**

in **Sociology**, Vol. 2, **op cit**, p. 210. The view of libertarians, then as now, was that such a view was hopelessly delusional, that special interests - rather than the mass of the populace - would be the principal beneficiaries of state interventionism. "Mixed economies" or social democratic systems would in reality only provide the mechanisms and masks for plutocracy (mercantilism reborn), whilst outright Marxist central planning would be despotism reborn. The American Spencerean William Graham Sumner [1840-1910] was one of the clearest exponents of this argument, and his work should have been readily available to Robertson. His most relevant work in this regard can be found in the following works: **What Social Classes Owe to Each Other** (1883), Harper Brothers, New York, 1920/Yale University Press, 1927/Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1947/The Right Wing Individualist Tradition in America, Arno Press, New York Times, New York, 1972; **War and Other Essays**, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1911/Books for Libraries, Freeport, New York, 1970; **Earth hunger and Other Essays** (Keller, Albert Galloway, ed.), Yale University Press, New Haven, 1913/Social Science Classics, Transaction Books, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1980; **The Challenge of Facts and Other Essays** (Keller, A. G., ed.), Yale University Press, New Haven, 1914; **The Forgotten Man and Other Essays** (Keller, A. G., ed.), Yale University Press, New Haven, 1918/Books for Libraries Press, Freeport, New York, 1969; **Essays of William Graham Sumner** (Keller, A. G., ed.), 2 vols, Yale University, New Haven, 1934 (Collection of the above 4 volumes)/Shoe String Press, Hamden, Conn., 1969; **Selected Essays of William Graham Sumner**, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1924; **Social Darwinism: Selected Essays of William Graham Sumner** (Persons, Stow, ed.), Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963; **The Conquest of the United States by Spain and Other Essays**, Regnery Gateway, Chicago, 1965.

176. **The Economics of Progress**, **op cit**, p. 177.

177. See Hayek, Friedrich, "The Theory of Complex Phenomena", "Notes on the Evolution of Systems of Rules of Conduct", and "The Results of Human Action but Not of Human Design", all in Idem, **Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1967; and also Idem, **Law, Legislation and Liberty**, Vol. 1, London, 1973.
178. On the wrong-headedness of attacks on "waste", see Rubner, Alex, **Three Sacred Cows of Economics**, Macgibbon and Kee, London, 1970.
179. For general critiques of scientism, see Hayek, Friedrich, **The Counter-Revolution of Science**, *op cit*, and Rothbard, "The Mantle of Science", in Schoeck, Helmut and Wiggins, John W., eds., **Scientism and Value**, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1960.
180. See Mallock, W. H., **A Critical Examination of Socialism**, John Murray, London, 1908/Harper, New York, 1908, pp. 71-8, which would have been available to Robertson. Modern critiques include: Hayek, Friedrich, ed., **Collectivist Economic Planning: Critical Studies on the Possibilities of Socialism**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1935/Augustus M. Kelley, New York, 1975; Mises, Ludwig von, **Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis**, Yale University Press, 1953/Jonathan Cape, London, 1957/Liberty Classics, Indianapolis, 1981; Hoff, Trygve, **Economic Calculation in the Socialist Society**, William Hodge, London, 1949/Liberty Press, Indianapolis, 1981; Polanyi, Michael, **The Contempt of Freedom: The Russian Experiment & After**, Watts, London, 1940/History, Philosophy and Sociology of Science: Classics, Staples and Precursors, Arno Press, New York Times, New York, 1975; Roberts, Paul Craig,

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181. **Letters on Reasoning**, *op cit*, p. 100.

182. "Democracy and Religion", **The Literary Guide**, New Series, No. 439, January 1933, p. 8.

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#### **Appendix: A Selective Bibliography of the Writings of J. M. Robertson**

There is no definitive bibliography of Robertson's writings. Neither Kaczkowski's doctoral dissertation, the G. A. Well's anthology or Marley Denwood's contribution to **A History of Freethought, Ancient and Modern** professes to have compiled one, and my own attempt below is no exception. However, I do believe it to be the most comprehensive so far. I have tried to include all his major books, monographs and essays. I have not generally listed the original publication of essays when they were subsequently gathered in one of his books. Also, I have not included all his regular columns "Sociological Notes" (subsequently "Political Notes") in **The Reformer**. In order to assist in separating out his journal contributions that were subsequently republished in book from those that were not I have attempted to include the titles of all the chapters in his books. Where it has as yet been impossible to obtain full publication details this is indicated by question marks or periods.

Robertson also wrote under the following pseudonyms: Arthur Gigadibs, L. Macaulay, M. M.

Wiseman, Robert Duncanson, F. R. Sarritor, "M. J. R.", Roland, Scotulus, and Macrobius.

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**Textual Note:** Minor stylistic and grammatical alterations have been made and the original title has been restored. The footnotes have also been restored to their original form.

## 4: THE NEW ENLIGHTENMENT: THE REVIVAL OF LIBERTARIAN IDEAS

"A new enlightenment will come", Hans Kohn, 1920 \*

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### Contents:

- I: Left and Right: The Unhelpful Dichotomy
- II: The New Enlightenment
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Notes

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Since the end of World War II there has emerged in almost every academic discipline or realm of thought a growing tide of opinion which we might categorise for the moment under the label - suggested by Edward Pearce - of the 'non-left'. Whether in economics or political philosophy, ethics or aesthetics, sociology or psychology, and even in artistic endeavour, there have

arisen powerful challenges to the intellectual hegemony long held by collectivist, statist and anti-capitalist thinking.

### **I: Left and Right: The Unhelpful Dichotomy**

I used Edward Pearce's phrase hesitantly, since the language of "left" and "right" is profoundly unhelpful. Not only have the terms reversed their meaning (pro-free market, liberal ideas were, when the categorisation was first employed in the post-Revolutionary French Assembly placed on the "left"); this language also conceals a massive and fraudulent conceptual package deal. Thus, a group of collectivist and anti-individualist doctrines - national socialism, fascist corporatism, racial collectivism, and anti-semitism - are lumped together as "rightwing" with their polar opposites - liberalism, individualism, and capitalism. This has indeed proved a most useful weapon for Marxist and socialist opponents of liberalism, who seem well aware of the dictum attributed to Lenin that "once you have labelled something you don't have to argue with it". Liberalism and liberals are constantly being smeared as somehow "reactionary", and linked with unpleasant and inhumane doctrines.

Indeed, every few years the term "the New Right" also gets dusted off and applied to some school of thought that socialist writers or journalists have suddenly deigned to notice. In my lifetime I have thus seen it applied to:

\*advocates of real Burkean conservatism like the American Russell

Kirk

\*the half-liberal, half-authoritarian conservatism of William F.

Buckley

\*the religious fundamentalism and social authoritarianism of the

"Moral Majority" in America

\*the free-market economics of Milton Friedman and the Institute of

Economic Affairs

- \*the National Socialism of the National Front in Britain
- \*the ex-Marxist French New Philosophers
- \*the rabidly anti-immigrant Front National of J. M. Le Pen in France
- \*the Europe-wide, quasi-Nietzschean, anti-capitalist organisation GRECE
- \*contemporary classical liberalism, libertarianism and anarcho-capitalism
- \*the writings of "sociobiologists" (theorists of evolutionary biology and psychology - many of whom are social democratic statist)
- \*various researchers into genetics or intelligence - many of whom are socialists
- \*advocates of racism
- \*those disillusioned former American welfare statist (inaccurately) termed "neo-conservatives", like Irving Kristol
- \*the High Toryism of Roger Scruton and other **Salisbury Review** writers.

It should be amply clear why the whole language of left and right should be disposed of in toto (1).

## **II: The New Enlightenment**

A far more informative label for the post-war liberal revival would be "the new liberalism" or the now widely used neologism "libertarianism". A phrase I find particularly suggestive, however, is "The New Enlightenment". Liberalism was born in the Enlightenment of the 18th century. The concepts of individual liberty, individualism, the free market, and rationalism crystallised in the intellectual systems of Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment and the natural-rights political philosophy of John Locke. The myriad views I shall discuss in this essay resemble nothing so much as a new statement of the ideals and aspirations of the **original** Enlightenment (2).



### III: The Fall and Rise of Liberalism

The concept of the New Enlightenment is also particularly fruitful in drawing attention to the question of **why** classical liberalism declined, why it was deposed by Marxism and various forms of socialism in the 20th century, and why the hopes and promises of the original Enlightenment were not fulfilled. The answer, as I argued in my essay "The Revolution of Reason" (3), lay within the very ambiguities of Enlightenment liberalism itself, its inconsistencies and inner contradictions. Moreover, the contemporary revival of liberalism can very much be seen as the belated attempt to resolve those ambiguities and to restate systematic liberalism without any of its fateful errors - in the words of Michael Polanyi, "to restate the great work of the Enlightenment without danger of the traps that have so disastrously ensnared its progress in the present century" (4).

### IV: Science and Freedom

Perhaps one of the most fatal ambiguities of classical liberalism lay in its concept of science. It justly celebrated the achievements of science, the liberation to be found in man's mastery over nature. But unfortunately the ethos of **science** became transformed into the ethos of "**scientism**", in reality a profoundly unscientific attempt to transfer the methodology of one scientific discipline to another, ignoring the crucial and distinctive attributes of their respective subjects. In the study of man and society, rational consciousness and free will hence became ruled out virtually a priori. The liberal ideal of the autonomous individual was subverted in various ways by the predominance of social sciences that ruled out of court the validity of introspection, and that were characterised by a militant reductionism and determinism, by methodological collectivism and holism, and by historicism. This vision of science was embodied not merely in Marxism's claim to be "scientific socialism", a science of society, but the idea that science endorsed or implied the concept of a "scientifically controlled" and "rationally plan-

ned" society (5).

One of the major roots of the New Enlightenment and the new liberalism has thus been a sustained critique of scientism by Michael Polanyi and Karl Popper. Polanyi, a noted physical scientist before he turned his attention to the philosophy of science and to the humane sciences, explored in a number of seminal works "an alternative ideal of knowledge, quite generally". His task of "conceptual reform" rejected not merely the "scourge of physicalism" in psychology and the life sciences - the idea that human beings are irrevocably determined by internal or external forces - but a reassessment of the very "conception of knowing" and its reconstruction upon the basis of "knowing as an active comprehension of the things known" and "the personal participation of the knower in all acts understanding". His philosophy constituted not merely an answer to the materialistic, determinist and scepticist positions which had resulted in the "moral inversions" of nihilism and totalitarian doctrines (whether National Socialist or Marxist international socialist). He also drew out the mistaken conception of science that undergirded the concepts of the alleged scientific planning of society and economy, by his view of "tacit knowledge" - knowledge that cannot be formally written down or can only be expressed in the terms of action. (6) It was this epistemological approach which thus led to Polanyi's critique of various forms of alleged planning, whether the democratic variety of Britain (a muddle) or that of the Soviet Union (tyranny). I use the word "alleged" since, as he demonstrated in his seminal studies of what actually occurs in the Soviet system - **The Contempt of Freedom** and **The Logic of Liberty** - such planning is a myth, an impossibility. The sort of knowledge necessary to make such planning possible is outside the reach of the would-be planners (7).

A similar, but arguably even more impressive and systematic, philosophy was produced by another refugee to Britain, Sir Karl Popper. Again, the failings of much of the mainstream of European philosophic and scientific thought provided the stimulus, in the words of John Gray in his essay "The Liberalism of Karl Popper", to "a defence of liberalism ... which gains much of its power from the fact that ... it is embedded in a comprehensive philosophical

perspective on the nature of human knowledge, rationality and freedom of thought and action" (8). Revolutionary ideologies like Marxism and fascism/national socialism were based, in Popper's view, on pre-scientific and irrational modes of thought (although disguised by the mantle of science) that he designated as holism and historicism. His case against holistic "social engineering" stems directly from his case against holistic methodology in social science. Just as holistic methodology ignores the inevitable selectivity of observation and attempts the logically impossible task of studying social wholes, holistic social engineering attempts to centralise knowledge. This attempt is not only epistemologically impossible, but also inherently coercive and systematically self-defeating, since it walls itself off from real information and the corrective process of criticism. Popper's "falsificationist" and "error elimination" approach sees knowledge as an evolutionary process. It is a view remarkably analogous to the functioning of the free market process, especially as outlined by Friedrich Hayek and other "Austrian School" economists (9).

## **V: The Autonomous Individual**

Since, as the Marxist philosopher Ellen M. Wood has put it in her **The Mind and Politics**, "a conscious or unconscious conception of human nature underlies every choice of social or political values" (10), it is not surprising that the success of particular political doctrines has been intimately associated with the success of related ideas in psychology and social theory. Both Polanyi and Popper rejected the deterministic or reductionist view of man, the idea that man's behaviour is overwhelmingly dictated by forces beyond his control, whether biological, racial, psychological, social, historical or economic. Their colleague Arthur Koestler similarly carried on a sustained critique of determinism within psychology and the life sciences and a vindication of human creativity and free will. (11)

At the same time there also arose a further broad movement in reaction against what Koestler called the "ratomorphic" image of man. Under the banner of "humanistic psychology" there

arose a myriad school of thinkers and therapists who rejected determinism. The most distinguished figure in this movement was undoubtedly Abraham Maslow, who outlined a new "psychology of being" that did not deny our introspective experience of free will. His approach also built upon the psychology of the **healthy individual**, the "self actualising" person as an ethical ideal. This approach also temper ran through many other analytic and therapeutic schools of thought, too numerous to mention here. Although all arguably possess their fair share of weaknesses and errors, they all embodied a sound common liberatory and voluntarist image of man (12).

Although many of the humanistic psychologists and therapists had no political orientation, or even an anti-liberal one, many were well aware, as Maslow put it, that their "new world view" implicitly contained "a new image of society and of all its institutions". Maslow moved from an early socialism to, by the time of his death, an almost completely libertarian position. His disciple and biographer, Frank G. Goble, was an outright libertarian, while a growing number of explicit libertarians have also added their weight to the ranks of humanistic psychology and have integrated and extended its insights into the broader framework of libertarianism. Here one would cite the work of New York University's Dr Thomas Szasz. or Dr Nathaniel Branden, and Dr Peter R. Breggin. (13)

## **VI: The Anomalies of Statism**

Why did these counter-collectivist and counter-statist intellectual revivals not occur until after World War II? If liberalism, as I have argued above, declined essentially because of its own inherent weaknesses, why didn't liberals recognise and correct them earlier?

Of course, Liberalism did not entirely disappear before the War. Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Lionel Robbins, Wilhelm Roepke, Frank H. Knight and other economists wrote the bulk of their major work in the pre-war period. But they gained mass followings and substan-

tial influence only after it. The reason, in my view, is largely that any intellectual system needs some sort of fair intellectual crack of the whip, so to speak, before its strengths and weaknesses can be fully assessed. Before we can properly refute any view, it must be boldly conjectured - to use Popper's terminology.

Here we might find Professor Thomas Kuhn's concept of the paradigm particularly useful. Kuhn, a distinguished historian and philosopher of science (also influenced by Popper), argued in his influential **Structure of Scientific Revolutions** that science does not progress in the way most people assume. All scientific work takes place within what he called a "paradigm", a fundamental conceptual world view. Scientific research is a working out, application or extension of the fundamental assumptions of the paradigm. Since any scientific paradigm is more or less related to objective reality, "anomalies" will occur, "violations of expectations", facts that cannot satisfactorily be explained by the accepted paradigm. Eventually a **new** paradigm, arising out of the anomalies of its predecessor will become accepted (usually by a new generation of scholars, rather than the existing one) (14).

Collectivism and statism, in their many and varied forms, **have** had their fair crack of the whip - usually more than metaphorically. National Socialism, the fascist corporate state, racial collectivism, communist central planning, Conservative interventionism, Keynesianism, the mixed economy, the welfare state - every conceivable form of collectivism has been intellectually elaborated (often to a tedious degree) **and** put into practice. And the results, according to which variety has been adopted, have been mass exterminations, repression, famine, poverty, inflation and economic decline. In other words, collectivist theories have been given plenty of time to be put to the tests of reason, while collectivist practices have generated more and more actually existing "anomalies", effects which are simply not explicable in terms of their own conceptual theories.

It is particularly notable that the so-called American "Chicago School" developed its vindication of neoclassical economics from a background of highly detailed empirical studies of

government intervention. As one leading Chicagoan, Yale Brozen, the author of many such studies, put it in his aptly titled 1965 essay, "The Revival of Classical Liberalism":

"Now that we have lived so long with government intervention in our economy, a few professional economists have begun to examine the results of that intervention. Some findings from these examinations are beginning to appear and affect, at least, the attitudes of an increasing number of scholars. If any resurgence of liberalism is occurring, this is the primary place it is apparent to me." (15)

Chicago scholars and their intellectual comrades at the Institute of Economic Affairs in Britain have thus built up a massive library of evidence on the effects of minimum wages and rent controls, the nature and effects of regulatory agencies, prices and wages control and virtually every form of intervention and regulation. In Milton Friedman's theoretical and historical analyses of the supply of money and its attempted regulation - by both Keynesians and pre Keynesians - we have an impressive vindication of the quantity theory of money ("monetarism" as it is frequently, and unhelpfully, called) (16). Black libertarian economists and sociologists like Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams have demolished the statist analysis of ethnic minorities and its disastrous policy prescriptions (17). The so-called "public choice" or "economics of politics" school, which grew out of the Chicago School, has taken the war into the enemy camp. Its analysis of the real nature and workings of the governmental, political and bureaucratic process further demonstrates the failings of the political process just as its forebears demonstrate the mythical nature of the much touted "market failure" (18).

It is probably this rootedness in empirical research which explains why it has been the Chicago School rather than the "Austrian School" which has received the most attention. The Austrian School, especially as manifest in such figures as the late Ludwig von Mises, Israel Kirzner and Murray Rothbard, possesses a methodological approach at such variance with the predominant

philosophical paradigm that it has really only started to gain a wider audience after the 'crisis period' of statism has become so apparent. The Austrian School is being increasingly considered as individuals seek a radical alternative to the established macroeconomic and positivist paradigm (19).

## **VII: The Crisis Period of Statism**

That we are now deeply in the crisis period of statism is apparent from the fact that the exposers of its anomalies by no means come to their work with a prior commitment to libertarian values. Thus Professor Martin Anderson, who wrote a devastating and influential critique of America's urban renewal programme, started that study as a "liberal" (in the American sense that is, an interventionist). It was precisely that objective study that generated his opposition, turned him into a libertarian and a career as one of the Republican Party's most influential policy experts (20).

A whole school of similarly sceptical intellectuals emerged. Many of them had been involved in the creation or administration of statist policies, recognised their failure and subsequently called for a re-orientation in social policy toward the market mechanism. They have been confusingly and inaccurately called the "neo-conservatives". Writers like Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, Daniel P. Moynihan, (the Assistant Secretary of Labour under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson), Norman Podhoretz, and others frequently associated with the journals **Commentary** and **The Public Interest** are among the most notable figures in this group (21). If the "neoconservatives" rebelled against aspects of statism from the very centre of the statist paradigm and policy elite, the "New Left" in America of the 1960s also largely arose as a reaction against statism and what it termed "corporate liberalism" (the technocratic, paternalist corporate state). The failure of the New Left to resolve its own internal contradictions, however, led to its dissolution, to a decline in some cases simply back into old style Marxism, into total disillusionment, or indeed to an incorporation into free market libertarianism (22).

## VIII: Ayn Rand and the New Libertarian Paradigm

One of the major figures of the New Enlightenment was the Russian-born Jewish American novelist and philosopher, Ayn Rand. In some respects she stands in relation to the rest of the New Enlightenment as Locke did to the original Enlightenment. In both her philosophic novels and in a large number of non-fiction essays she attempted to create a broad philosophic system following a consistent path from metaphysics, through epistemology to ethics and politics, and not forgetting aesthetics. In essence her approach was neo-Aristotelian (but attempting to correct the errors she perceived in its earlier forms). What made such an impact was her bold moral defence of capitalism. Rejecting the consequentialist, utilitarian or Christian approaches manifested by writers like Hayek, Henry Hazlit or Paul Johnson, she defended what she saw as a scientific morality, an ethical egoism - the "virtue of selfishness" as she termed it in the title of one book. Individuals have a right to exist for their own sake, the pursuit of their own happiness, and not for the sake of any alleged social good, or some fictitious collective or entity, whether the people, the nation, the race, the fatherland, or God.

Although initially Ayn Rand's approach was treated with scorn or contemptuous silence in academic circles, all her works were bestsellers and had an enormous impact among young people. Indeed, they have probably had numerically the biggest impact in converting young people to libertarian ideas. And there are now a substantial number of young professional academic philosophers, like Tibor Machan, Eric Mack, David Kelley, Douglas Den Uyl, Douglas Rasmussen and Leonard Peikoff, explaining and developing her approach. Even Robert Nozick, whose **Anarchy, State and Utopia** has so far proved to be the libertarian work which has received the most academic attention, while rejecting the basis of the Randian moral argument had to devote a serious critical analysis to it in his discussion "On the Randian Argument" (25). Her work has also provided inspiration for a growing body of artistic expression, in the mainstream novel, in science fiction, in poetry and drama, in the visual arts, in both classical and rock music.



Rand's thought has been probably the principal instigator and inspiration of the contemporary libertarian movement, together with another very similar variant of neo-Aristotelian Natural Law/Natural Rights philosophy developed by Murray Rothbard (originally an early disciple of hers). The more radical exponents of her Objectivist philosophy, together with Rothbard and his followers and a number of other schools of libertarianism, reject her "minimal statism/limited government" views (the traditional classical liberal position) in favour of "anarcho-capitalism" or "free market anarchism". This view holds that the monopolisation of defensive and restitutive force by the state is both an infringement of individual liberty and economically unnecessary - that the market can provide agencies of defence, justice and law enforcement. A growing body of research in economic theory, history, jurisprudence, anthropology and sociology is being produced to support this market anarchist approach. (26)

#### **IX: "Bliss It Was" ... Some Personal Reflections**

I have attempted to sketch some of the principal forces at work in the revival of libertarian ideas. My own experience is very much a micro version of the macro intellectual forces outlined. My own personal background was what is called "working class", and I note with interest that many of my political colleagues share this socioeconomic origin. Our personal experience of socialism and the welfare state undoubtedly enabled us to see through their bogus claims - and the ethos of social determinism.

It is difficult to convey the excitement I and many of my friends experienced as we discovered the diverse streams of libertarian thought which emerged in our lifetime. In his influential textbook, **Economics**, Paul Samuelson quoted Wordsworth's famous lines about the French Revolution:

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive

But to be young was very heaven.

For Samuelson these lines summed up his excitement in discovering Keynesian ideas. But Keynes' fallacious and feeble dilettantism pales into insignificance besides the synthesis emerging from the post-war New Enlightenment. Here were the clear explanations for the world we experienced, its successes and its many tragic failures and problems. Moreover, these were not barren unfalsifiable dogmatisms but a continuing "research programme", in which a plenitude of different discoveries were unmistakably pointing in the same direction and to the same conclusions. In a phrase, we were observing the emergence of a libertarian paradigm clearly destined to replace the statist paradigm.

### **X: The Recovery of Nerve**

But this does not, perhaps, tell the full story. Why does not everyone perceive the same truth? There are undoubtedly some interesting psychological factors at work here (and some libertarians, like Andre Spies, are exploring this issue). A further aspect of interest is undoubtedly the influence of "popular culture", which, while despised by the statist intelligentsia, constitutes the real cultural alternative or "underground" of the 20th century.

The cultural mainstream for this century has been as much dominated by anti-libertarian ideas as the politico-economic mainstream. It has been characterised by the ethos of an "Age of Defeat", as Cohn Wilson has put it in one perceptive book of that title, of "the unheroic hypothesis" or the "discussion of triviality" (27). Doctrines of naturalism or realism echo collectivism's social determinism. The traditional novel of manners evokes mainly boredom. Literary and stylistic experimentation seem devoted to little but "disillusionment, cynicism, disgust and gnawing envy" or in "making delicate picture puzzles out of the buttends of life", as the American literary critic Henry Murray has put it. A large part of literary and cultural enter-

prise has also been characterised, in the words of John Weightman in "The Concept of the Avant Garde", by "the flight from reason ... [a] disgust ... with the idea of science", evocations of perceptual and epistemological chaos, and embodiments of crackpot philosophies and cults (28).

In many of the young libertarians I meet as founder and Director the Libertarian Alliance and Secretary of the Adam Smith Club I have found an enormous alienation from the products of establishment or mainstream or "high" culture (whatever we chose to call it), or, to be more accurate, from its 20th century manifestations. As Ayn Rand put it in her essay "The New Enemies of the Untouchables": "When a culture is dominated by an irrational philosophy, a major symptom of its decadence is the inversion of all values" (29). Rational moral values, a life-affirming sense of life, a voluntaristic image of man, have been preserved, however, in what Rand calls the "bootleg" forms of romanticism, in the adventure, detective, thriller and science-fiction genres. It is no accident that the Frankfurt School Marxist Max Horkheimer contemptuously referred to the "rhetoric of individuality" within popular culture. It is no mere rhetoric!. There are no social determinist apologies for crime in the "Dirty Harry" films, only a love of justice and empathy with the victim, rather than the perpetrator. Individual integrity, honour, justice: these are the core values in so much popular culture, from the Italian westerns to kung-fu films. It is in science fiction, however, that we find those specific values that Professor Peter Gay, in his definitive work **The Enlightenment: An Interpretation**, attributed to the original Enlightenment - "the recovery of nerve" in humanity's potential and destiny, "the celebration of industry" and of science and technology.

It is notable that for countless libertarians - including myself - it has been popular culture, and especially science-fiction, that have influenced and emotionally sustained us. Leading science-fiction authors like Robert Heinlein, Poul Anderson, Jerry Pournelle, Larry Niven, and F. Poul Wilson, amongst many others, consistently dramatise themes relating to the issues of rationalism versus superstition, progress versus reaction, freedom and individualism versus socialism and authoritarianism (30).

It is also significant that socialism, having literally failed to deliver the goods, is increasingly abandoning the mantle of science. Its predominant tone is now one of doom-mongering, of hysterical prophecies of environmental disaster and the "limits to growth", of rabid technophobia and opposition to progress and science. Indeed, some socialists like Robert Heilbroner explicitly call for a return to a neo-feudal, no-growth system in which a superstitious populace are manipulated - for their own good and that of "nature", of course - by a new priestly class of ecologists (31). The original Enlightenment identified itself "with sound method, progress, success, the future", declared Professor Gay (32). The inspiration many libertarians find in science-fiction and their enthusiastic commitment to the vision and role of science thus makes the title name "The New Enlightenment" even more apposite.

## **XI: The Future**

What are the prospects for this New Enlightenment? There is no inevitability in history. And while scientific paradigms generally move in the direction of increasing credibility and truth, the broader socio-political community is somewhat different from the scientific community. The scientific community has characteristics which provide an impetus to the discovery of the truth. The socio-political community, unfortunately, has characteristics which, to say the least, are not especially amenable to change. Special interest groups, the "tax eaters" who use the political means of state power to exploit their fellows, are going to be less than objective in examining either the justice or the consequences of their mode of existence, as John Burton has shown so illuminatingly in his recent essay "The Instability of the Middle Way" (33).

Nevertheless, there is a power to truth. We have a powerful emergent libertarian synthesis - the beginnings of a "science of liberty" as Murray Rothbard calls it - that explains the anomalies of statism and offers a research programme of enormous promise. But it is entirely on us as individuals, on our dedication and commitment to political and intellectual struggle, that the

prospects for ideological victory depend.

## NOTES

- \* Hans Kohn, "Nationalism", in Arthur A. Cohen, ed., **The Jew: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal 'Der Jude', 1916-1928**, Judaic Studies Series, University of Alabama Press, 1980, p. 30
1. The best discussion of the origins and ambiguity of the left/right spectrum are in Murray N. Rothbard, "Left and Right: The Prospects For Liberty", **Left and Right: A Journal of Libertarian Thought**, Spring 1965; Samuel Brittan, **Left or Right: The Bogus Dilemma**, Secker and Warburg, London, 1968; Idem, "Further Thoughts on Left and Right", in **Capitalism and the Permissive Society**, Macmillan, London, 1973; and the perceptive comments by Elie Kedourie, "The History of Ideas and Guilt By Association", in Idem, **The Crossman Confessions and Other Essays in Politics, History and Religion**, Mansell Publishing, London, 1985. To confuse things further it was indicative of the 20th century decline of liberal ideas and values that in the United States the very word liberalism reversed its meaning. Originally it designated an ideology of individualism and anti-statism but became expropriated by the 1920s by advocates of collectivism and statism. Ironically, the term "conservative", which originally designated an anti-rationalist and anti-individualist philosophy which glorified "communal" values, tradition, authority or the nation, became applied to libertarians (much to their justifiable horror). The Conservative Party in Britain has eventually come to include some libertarians as well as real conservatives.
2. The best general study of the Enlightenment remains Peter Gay's **The Enlightenment:**

**An Interpretation**, 2 vols., Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1967, 1970.

"The New Enlightenment" was also chosen by David Graham as the title for the six-part television series about the liberal revival made by his company, Diverse Productions, for Channel 4 in Britain and for worldwide distribution. The programme outline was written by myself, and a book of the series was authored by David Graham and Peter Clarke as **The New Enlightenment**, Macmillan, London, 1986. The phrase was also independently conceived and employed in Jerome Tuccille's penetrating **Who's Afraid of 1984?**, Arlington House, New Rochelle, New York, 1975, pp. 209-215.

3. Chris R. Tame, "The Revolution of Reason: Peter Gay, The Enlightenment, and the Ambiguities of Classical Liberalism", **The Journal of Libertarian Studies**, 1(3), Summer, 1977.
4. Michael Polanyi, **Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi** (Grene, Marjorie, ed.), University of Chicago Press, 1969, p. 5
5. For two representative examples of this scientistic, social self-regulation theme, omnipresent in 20th century thought, see Wesley Clair Mitchell, "Intelligence and the Guidance of Economic Evolution", in Mitchell et al., **Authority and the Individual**, Harvard University Press, 1937 and H. Levy, **The Universe of Science**, Watts, London, 1932, p. v. For the sake of brevity I have not included a discussion of Friedrich Hayek's critique of scientism in his **The Counter Revolution of Science**, Allen and Unwin, London, 1952, nor the fruitful personal and intellectual relationships between Hayek, Popper and Polanyi. Murray Rothbard's "The Mantle of Science", in Helmut Schoeck and J. W. Wiggins, eds., **Scientism and Values**, Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1960, also provided an incisive critique of the pseudo-scientific nature of "scientism" and a demonstration of the conformity of libertarianism with the premises and nature of real science.

6. Michael Polanyi, **Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy**, Routledge, London, 2nd edn., 1962. In addition to the two above cited works, Polanyi's other major works are: **Science, Faith and Society**, Oxford University Press, 1946; 2nd edn, Phoenix Books, University of Chicago Press, 1964; **The Tacit Dimension**, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1960; **The Study of Man**, University of Chicago Press, 1963; and (with Harry Prosch), **Meaning**, University of Chicago Press, 1975. A useful general introduction to his thought is Richard Gerwick, **The Way of Discovery: An Introduction to the Thought of Michael Polanyi**, Oxford University Press, 1977.
7. See Michael Polanyi, **The Logic of Liberty: Reflections and Rejoinders**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1951 and **The Contempt of Freedom: The Russian Experiment and After**, Watts, London, 1940, were further extended and integrated with the Austrian School view on economic calculation by Paul Craig Roberts in his **Alienation and the Soviet Economy**, New Mexico University Press, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1971. Other scholars were influenced by Polanyi in philosophy and the life sciences, as shown in Marjorie Grene, ed., **The Anatomy of Knowledge**, Routledge, London, 1969; Idem, **Toward a Unity of Knowledge**, International Universities Press, New York, 1969; **Interpretations of Life and Mind**, Routledge, London, 1971.
8. John Gray, "The Liberalism of Karl Popper", **Government and Opposition**, 11(3), Summer 1976, p. 339. This essay, reprinted as Scientific Notes No. 2, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1985, provides an interesting account of the unity of Popper's philosophical and political approaches. Popper's classic work on the theory of knowledge and the philosophy of science remains **The Logic of Scientific Discovery**, Hutchinson, London, 1959, but readers are also referred to his **Conjectures and Refutations**, Routledge, London, 1963, and **Objective Knowledge**, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972. More directly addressing political issues

are **The Open Society and Its Enemies**, 2 vols., Routledge, London, 1945 and **The Poverty of Historicism**, Routledge, London, 1944. P. A. Schilpp, ed., **The Philosophy of Karl Popper**, 2 vols., Open Court, La Salle, Illinois, 1974, contains a collection of papers about Popper's work, as well as his own "Replies to My Critics" and an "Intellectual Autobiography".

9. A fascinating comparison of the similarity between the Popperian concept of science and the market process can also be found in Bill Stoddard, **The Scientific Method as an Application of Economics**, Scientific Notes No. 1, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1985.
10. Ellen M. Wood, **The Mind and Politics: An Approach to the Meaning of Liberal and Socialist Individualism**, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972, p. ?
11. Koestler's anti-reductionism is elaborated in "Of Dogs and Men", "Of Geese and Men", "Of Apes and Men", and "The Poverty of Psychology" in Idem, **Drinkers of Infinity: Essays, 1955-1967**, Hutchinson, London, 1968, and A. Koestler and J. R. Smythies, eds., **Beyond Reductionism: New Perspectives in the Life Sciences**, Hutchinson, London, 1969. A good overview of his work can be found in his own **Janus: A Summing Up**, Hutchinson, London, 1978. In spite of his rejection of Marxism and his penetrating remarks on the "delusionary streak" in human behaviour that leads to self-identification with mythical collectivities, Koestler remained politically naive. See Stephen Toulmin, "Arthur Koestler's Theodicy: On Sin, Science and Politics", **Encounter**, February, 1979.
12. Major works in humanistic psychology and therapy include: Abraham Maslow, **Motivation and Personality**, Harper and Row, New York, 1954 and **Toward a Psychology of Being**, Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 2nd edn., 1968; Carl Rogers, **On Becoming a Person**, Houghton Mifflin,



Boston, 1961, and **Client-Centred Therapy**, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1951; Sigmund Koch, "Psychological Science Versus The Science-Humanism Antinomy: Intimations of a Significant Science of Man", **American Psychologist**, 16(10), October, 1961; Idem, "Reflections on the State of Psychology", **Social Research**, 38(4), Winter, 1971; Sidney M. Jourard, **The Transparent Self**, Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1964; Joel Fagan and Irma Lee Shepherd, eds., **Gestalt Therapy Now**, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1972; William Glasser, **Reality Therapy**, Harper and Row, New York, 1965; Albert Ellis, **Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy**, Lyle Stuart, New York, 1962; Viktor Frankl, **The Will to Meaning**, Souvenir Press, London, 1971; Robert Assagioli, **Psychosynthesis**, Turnstile Press, Wellinborough, Northants, 1975.

Viktor Frankl, in **Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy**, Beacon Press, Boston, 1959, sums up the temper of the humanistic movement very well:

"Man is ultimately self determining ... What he becomes within the limits of endowment and environment - he has made out of himself. In the concentration camps, for example, in this living laboratory and on this testing ground we watched and witnessed some of our comrades behave like swine while others behaved like saints. Man has both potentialities within himself; which one is actualized depends on decisions but not on conditions", pp. 136-7.

13. Frank G. Goble, **The Third Force**, Grossman, New York, 1970; Peter Breggin, **The Psychology of Freedom: Liberty and Love as a Way of Life**, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York, 1980. Nathaniel Branden, **The Psychology of Self-Esteem**, Bantam Books, New York, 1971; Idem, **Breaking Free**, Bantam Books, New York, 1972; Idem, **The Disowned Self**, Bantam Books, New York, 1973, **The Psychology of Romantic Love**, J. P. Tarcher, Los

Angeles, 1980; Idem, **Honouring the Self: Personal Integrity and the Heroic Potentials of Human Nature**, J. P. Tarcher, Los Angeles, 1983. Thomas Szasz's works are so voluminous that it is invidious to have to select the major ones. However, the interested reader should not fail to consult **The Myth of Mental Illness**, Paladin Books, London, 1972; Idem, **Ideology and Insanity**, Calder and Boyars, London, 1973; Idem, **The Ethics of Psychoanalysis**, Routledge, London, 1973.

14. Thomas Kuhn, **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions**, Chicago University Press, 2nd edn., 1970. His concept of the paradigm has been put to fruitful libertarian use by Murray Rothbard in "Ludwig von Mises and the Paradigm For Our Age", in Idem, **Egalitarianism as a Revolt Against Nature**, Libertarian Review Press, Washington, D.C., 1974, and by Roy Childs in "Liberty and the Paradigm of Statism", in Tibor Machan, ed., **The Libertarian Alternative**, Nelson-Hall, Chicago, 1974. There is a large and growing literature, far too extensive to detail here, applying the concept to the evolution of various disciplines in both the natural and the human sciences.
15. Yale Brozen, "The Revival of Traditional Liberalism", **New Individualist Review**, Spring, 1965, p. 6. This essay provides an excellent survey of the early empirical Chicagoite work. Brozen has also edited a valuable anthology of Chicago scholarship, **The Competitive Economy**, General Learning Press, Morristown, New Jersey, 1975. My own essay, "The Chicago School: Lessons From the Thirties For The Eighties", **Economic Affairs**, 4(1), October, 1983, reprinted as Libertarian Reprints No. 8, 1984, also supplies a useful introduction to the origins and character of Chicagoism.
16. Milton Friedman's work is wide-ranging. Classic examples can be found in Milton Friedman and Anna J. Schwartz, **A Monetary History of the United**

**States, 1867-1970**, Princeton University Press, 1963; Idem, **Essays in Positive Economics**, University of Chicago Press, 1953; Idem, **Capitalism and Freedom**, University of Chicago Press, 1962. There is a huge body of confirmatory scholarship on "monetarism" (ie the quantity theory of money) by English and American economists. Both **The Journal of Political Economy** and **The Journal of Law and Economics** are indispensable sources of Chicago analysis, as are the publications of the Institute of Economic Affairs and the journal **Economic Affairs** in Britain.

17. See, amongst his many works, Thomas Sowell, **Race and Economics**, Longman, London, 1975, and **The Economics and Politics of Race**, William Morrow, New York 1983. And see also Walter Williams, **The State Against Blacks**, McGraw Hill, New York, 1982.
  
18. The literature of the "public choice" or "economics of politics" extension of the Chicago School is now becoming as numerous as that of its intellectual progenitor. For good introductions see, D. C. Mueller, **Public Choice**, Cambridge University Press, 1979; Gordon Tullock, ed., **Politics of Bureaucracy**, Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1964; Idem, **The Vote Motive**, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1976; Gordon Tullock and Robert D. Tollison, eds., **The Theory of Public Choice: Political Applications of Economics**, Michigan University Press, 1972. Arthur Seldon, **The New Economics**, Study Guide No.2, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1985. The public choice school is in turn part of a broader phenomenon of "economic imperialism", the vindication of the relevance of economics to the analysis of all aspects of human and social existence. See Richard B. McKenzie and Gordon Tullock, **The New World of Economics: Explorations into the Human Experience**, Richard D. Irwin, Homewood, Illinois, 2nd edn., 1978.

19. The great representatives of the Austrian School in the 20th century are Ludwig von Mises and Frederick Hayek. As with most of the Austrians both men were polymaths, political and social philosophers as much as economists. Representative works by them are von Mises, **Human Action**, 3rd rev. edn., Henry Regnery, Chicago, 1966, and **Liberalism**, Sheed Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, 1978; Hayek, **Individualism and Economic Order**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1949; **The Constitution of Liberty**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1960. Recent restatements of the Austrian School approach are E. G. Dolan, ed., **The Foundations of Modern Austrian Economics**, Sheed and Ward, Kansas City, 1976; Louis M. Spadaro, ed., **New Directions in Austrian Economics**, Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, 1978; Mario J. Rizzo, ed., **Time, Uncertainty, and Disequilibrium: Exploration of Austrian Themes**, Lexington Books/D. C. Heath, Lexington, Mass., 1979; Larry S. Moss, ed., **The Economics of Ludwig von Mises: Toward a Critical Reappraisal**, Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, 1976; G. P. O'Driscoll, Jr., **Economics as a Coordination Problem: The Contributions of F. A. von Hayek**, Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, Kansas City, 1977; Alex Shand, **The Capitalist Alternative: An Introduction to Neo-Austrian Economics**, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1984; W. Duncan Reekie, **Markets, Entrepreneurs and Liberty: An Austrian View of Capitalism**, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1984. The most important contemporary Austrian scholars are Israel Kirzner and Murray Rothbard. Kirzner's work has focussed particularly on entrepreneurship. See his **Competition and Entrepreneurship**, University of Chicago Press, 1973. Murray Rothbard has provided the most systematic development of Austrianism. In his **Man, Economy and State**, 2 vols, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1962, **Power and Market: Government and the Economy**, Institute for Humane Studies, Menlo Park, California, 1970 and in countless other books, monographs and essays Rothbard has provided a sounder Aristotelian philosophical base for Austrian methodology, extended its economic

analysis, and attempted to integrate it within a broader analytic and normative "science of liberty" encompassing all the humane studies. The concept of libertarianism as "the science of freedom" can be found in his **Egalitarianism As a Revolt Against Nature**, Libertarian Review Press, Washington, D.C., 1974, p. x. Interestingly, the phrase is also used by Peter Gay as the subtitle for the second volume of his study of the original Enlightenment.

20. Martin Anderson, **The Federal Bulldozer**, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1964, was the classic case of the American "liberal" learning from reality. Anderson's conversion to libertarianism is discussed in Beatrice Hessen, "Review of The Federal Bulldozer", **The Objectivist**, April 1966, pp. 11-12.
  
21. On the so called neoconservatives, see Nigel Ashford, "The NeoConservatives", **Government and Opposition**, 13(3), Summer, 1981; also Norman Podhoretz, **Breaking Ranks: A Political Memoir**, Harper and Row, New York, 1979; Irving Kristol, **Two Cheers for Capitalism**, Basic Books, New York, 1978; Daniel P. Moynihan, "Where Liberals Went Wrong", in Melvin Laird, ed., **The Republican Papers**, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1968. In my view this trend would be better characterised by a label like "revisionist liberalism" or "chastened liberalism". The growth of a new realism about the effects and potential of state power was manifest in the work of many who were not necessarily perceived as neoconservatives: for example, Professor Jay Forrester at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Forrester described what he called "the counter-intuitive behaviour of social systems" that "should make us cautious about rushing into programs on the basis of short-term humanitarian impulses. The eventual result can be anti-humanitarian ... At times government programs cause exactly the reverse of the desired result" - in "The Counterintuitive Behaviour of Social Systems", **Reason**, 3(4) and 3(5), July and August 1971. Other works on the crisis in American "liberalism"

were Theodore J. Lowi, **The Politics of Disorder**, Basic Books, New York, 1971; Milton Mayer, **Man v. The State**, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California, 1970; Matthew P. Dumont, "Down the Bureaucracy!", **Trans-Action**, 7(12), October, 1970; William Pfaff, **Condemned to Freedom**, Random House, New York, 1971.

22. On the libertarian aspects of the American New Left, see Ronald Hamowy, "Left and Right Meet", **New Republic**, 12 March 1966. An example of such quasi-libertarianism can be found in Hal Draper, "NeoCorporatism and Neo-Reformers", **New Politics**, Fall, 1961, and "The Two Souls of Socialism", **Our Generation**, January 1969. The most detailed examination of this subject can be found in my as yet unpublished **Contemporary American Radicalism: The Left, The Right, and the State**, B. A. Dissertation, Department of American Studies, The University of Hull, 1969.
23. Ayn Rand called her distinctive philosophy "Objectivism". Her major novels are **The Fountainhead**, Panther Books, London, 1961 and **Atlas Shrugged**, New American Library, New York, 1957. Amongst her major non-fiction works are **The Virtue of Selfishness**, New American Library, New York, 1964, and **Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal**, New American Library, New York, 1967; **The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution**, New American Library, New York, 1971; **Philosophy: Who Needs It?**, Bobbs Merrill, New York, 1982. A major biographical study, **The Passion of Ayn Rand**, by Barbara Branden is forthcoming. I provide a brief introduction in "The Moral Case For Private Enterprise", in Cecil Turner, ed., **The Case For Private Enterprise**, Bachman and Turner, London, 1979.
24. Virtually the only exception to the academic philosophical establishment's haughty attitude to Rand was the head of the University of Southern California's

School of Philosophy, Dr John Hospers. He discussed her ideas in his popular philosophy textbook, **An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 2nd edn., 1967. He also wrote an excellent introduction to libertarianism, **Libertarianism: A Political Philosophy For Tomorrow**, Nash Publishing, Los Angeles, 1971. Among the younger professional philosophers influenced by Rand are Tibor Machan, **Human Rights and Human Liberties**, Nelson Hall, Chicago, 1975; Douglas J. Den Uyl and Douglas B. Rasmussen, eds., **The Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand**, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, 1984; David Kelley, **The Evidence of the Senses**, Louisiana University Press, forthcoming; Leonard Piekoff, **The Ominous Parallels: The End of Freedom in America**, Stein and Day, New York, 1982.

25. Robert Nozick, **Anarchy, State and Utopia**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1975, is indispensable. His essay, "On the Randian Argument", is reprinted, together with a reply by Den Uyl and Rasmussen, in Jeffrey Paul, ed., **Reading Nozick**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983.
26. The anarcho-capitalist school of libertarianism can be found expounded from an Austrian School/Natural Rights perspective in Murray Rothbard, **For a New Liberty**, CollierMacmillan, New York, 2nd edn., 1973, and **The Ethics of Liberty**, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1982; and from a Chicago School/Utilitarian perspective in David Friedman, **The Machinery of Freedom**, Arlington House, New Rochelle, 1978. Other major works include Morris and Linda Tannehill and Jarrett Wollstein, **Society without Government**, Arno Press, New York, 1972. Good general introductions to the modern libertarian spectrum are Jerome Tuccille, **Radical Libertarianism: A New Political Alternative**, Harper and Row, New York, 2nd edn., 1971; Harry Browne, **How I Found Freedom In An Unfree World**, Macmillan, New York, 1973; Tibor Machan, ed., **The Libertarian Alternative**, Nelson-Hall, Chicago,

1974, and Idem, ed., **The Libertarian Reader**, Rowan and Littlefield, Totowa, New Jersey, 1982; David Osterfeld, **Freedom, Society and the State**, University Press of America, New York, 1983. Henri Lepage, **Tomorrow, Capitalism**, Open Court, La Salle, Illinois, 1982; Geoffrey Sampson, **An End To Allegiance: Individual Freedom and the New Politics**, Maurice Temple Smith, London, 1984.

27. Cohn Wilson's **The Age of Defeat**, Gollancz, London, 1959, and **The Strength to Dream**, Gollancz, London, 1962, have provided telling criticisms of the prevailing negativity of "establishment" culture. Robert Conquest has also penned dissenting essays on literary and aesthetic matters, many gathered in **The Abomination of Moab**, Maurice Temple Smith, London, 1979. Tom Wolfe, a vigorous libertarian conservative, has extended his witty and caustic cultural portraits of such social phenomena as "radical chic" to more systematic cultural and aesthetic criticism in **The Painted Word**, Farrer Straus Giroux, New York, 1975 and **From Bauhaus to Our House**, Jonathan Cape, London, 1982.
28. Henry A. Murray, "In Nomine Diaboli", in T. Hillway and L. S. Mansfield, eds., **Moby Dick: Centennial Essays**, Southern Methodist University Press, Dallas, Texas, 1983; John Weightman, "The Concept of the Avant-Garde", **Encounter**, July 1969, pp. 13-14.
29. Ayn Rand, "The New Enemies of 'The Untouchables'", **The Objectivist Newsletter** (New York), 1(8), p. 36. Her influential work has been gathered in **The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature**, New American Library, New York, 1971. Much of the critical and literary work stimulated by her writing has so far appeared only in fugitive publications. The most distinguished is currently **Aristos: The Journal of Aesthetics**, P.O. Box



1105, Radio City Station, New York, New York, 10101, USA.

30. See my "Life, Liberty and the Stars: The Ideological Significance of Science Fiction", **Science and Public Policy**, II(5), October 1984 and reprinted as Cultural Notes No. 6, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1984, provides a brief introduction to the character of science fiction and for references to major works in the genre.
  
31. The literature of doom-mongering and statist "ecology" is enormous. Robert Heilbroner's **The Human Prospect**, Norton, New York, 1974, is representative. I offer a detailed critique of Heilbroner's significance, in **Environmentalism and Totalitarianism: An Obituary For Modern 'Liberalism'**, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1985. Libertarians have produced a voluminous literature outlining the fallacies of hysterical environmentalist, "no growth" and anti-nuclear movements. My essay on Heilbroner provides a brief bibliography of this literature. Given the current hysteria and ignorance on one aspect of this question, I feel constrained to especially recommend Professor Petr Beckmann's **The Health Hazards of Not Going Nuclear**, Golem Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1976.
  
32. Peter Gay, **The Enlightenment: An Interpretation**, op cit
  
33. John Burton, "The Instability of the Middle Way", Idem ed., **Hayek's 'Serfdom' Revisited: Essays by Economists, Philosophers and Political Scientists on 'The Road to Serfdom' After 4 Years**, Hobart Paperback 18, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1984, pp. 95-96

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**Textual Note:** In the published version of this paper my footnotes were removed and rendered as a bibliographical appendix entitled "What To Read". I have restored them to their original form as footnotes. I have also corrected some typographical and grammatical errors.

## 5: AGAINST THE NEW MERCANTILISM: THE RELEVANCE OF ADAM SMITH

### Contents:

- I: Introduction: Economics, Political Economy and the Philosophy of History
  - II: Mercantilism and Neo-Mercantilism
  - III: The Wretched Spirit of Monopoly
  - IV: Neo-Mercantilism and Corporatism
  - V: The Contemporary Corporate State
  - VI: Demystification and Political Economy
  - VII: The Role of Value in Analysis
  - VIII: Conclusion: The Market Versus the Present Establishments
- Notes

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### I: Introduction: Economics, Political Economy and the Philosophy of History

While the 200th anniversary, in 1976, of the publication of **The Wealth of Nations** celebrated the writer who is justly famed as one of the greatest economists - the founder, in his **magnum opus**, of the discipline we now call "economics" - it will undoubtedly seem paradoxical to argue, as this essay will do, that Adam Smith's relevance for our time is not primarily as an **economist**.

In so doing, I hasten to add, I am not denigrating his achievement in this sphere, his creation

in the systematic form of the basic "tool box" (the concepts, methods, lines of approach) of positive economic analysis, the "apparatus of mind, [the] technique of thinking" which, as Keynes so notably pointed out, truly distinguishes economics as a science (1). But Smith was not, of course, only an economist; he contributed to **belles lettres**, wrote a "speculative" history of astronomy, and, in **The Theory of Moral Sentiments**, composed a pioneering work in what we would today call social psychology. In keeping with this breadth of interest Smith's economics was as far removed in essence as in time from the hyper-refinements of abstract technique and mathematical formulations which characterise contemporary economics. Moreover, the rediscovery of a longer version of his **Lectures on Jurisprudence** has recently underlined Smith's fundamental concern with a philosophical, or more accurately (albeit anachronistically) **sociological** perspective on human society and its historical development, and his expressed intention (in **The Theory of Moral Sentiments**) to provide "an account of the general principles of law and government and the different revolutions they have undergone in different periods of society" (2).

## II: Mercantilism and Neo-Mercantilism

Much of Smith's philosophy of history in fact emerged in **The Wealth of Nations**, especially in his famous delineation of the "four stages" theory of economic, social and political development in which the mode of subsistence played a predominantly determining role in the development of class structure and the form of government. It was an approach which has quite justly been termed an "economic interpretation of history", although attempts to characterise it as merely a proto-Marxist philosophy are ultimately unsuccessful (3). However, in the light of this broad historical and social perspective it is hardly surprising to find Smith's economics resolutely a "political economy", a wide-ranging analysis that took in the whole fabric of social life, its patterns of power, privilege and class in both their contemporary and historical settings.

The rootedness of Smith's political economy in an analysis of the character and historical development of the "present establishment" of Europe (4) is rendered particularly important and significant, however, by one of the great ironies of history: that 200 years after the publication of **The Wealth of Nations**, the "present establishment" of Europe once more bears - as we shall attempt to demonstrate in this essay - the most startling resemblance to that of Smith's time, to the "commercial or mercantile system". This observation is hardly original, of course. Following Keynes' favourable reassessment of Mercantilist theory in **The General Theory** (5) and the renewed obsession of all nations with securing a surplus on the balance of payments, many economists have labelled the commercial policy of the past few decades as, in the title of one work by Joan Robinson, **The New Mercantilism** (6).

But it is important to realise that classic mercantilism was far more than simply a policy of obtaining a favourable balance of payments based upon the simple-minded formulas of "bullionism", the confusion of precious metals with real wealth (i.e. productive material capital). It involved an increasingly complex policy of state regulation (in intention, if not always in successful practice) of the whole economic system - the encouragement and control of trade and labour associations, and the attainment of "full employment". In the name of the "national interest" competing and conflicting economic groups and functions were to be "harmonised" and co-ordinated; chaotic and hazardous competition would be replaced by "orderly" and "fair" development which would be in the interest of the whole community. As Professor Lipson wrote in the extremely thorough two volumes on the **Age of Mercantilism** in his **Economic History of England**:

"[W]hat is distinctive of mercantilism is the more systematic application of a protectionist system in all spheres of the national economy in order to develop native productive sources of every kind ..." (7)

That the study of mercantilism and the recognition of its contemporary parallels might prove of singular utility in understanding the dynamics and nature of our own social and economic

system had indeed been stressed by the major historians of mercantilism. Professor Lipson, after completing his economic histories of both the mercantilist and modern periods and noting the "striking similarities" (8) between them, made an interesting attempt to assess, in the work of this title, **A Planned Economy or Free Enterprise: The Lessons of History** (9). Likewise, Heckscher, in his monumental and classic work on mercantilism stressed the "innumerable similarities" and, while somewhat more cautiously than Lipson observing that "mercantilism cannot be resurrected in its entirety any more than any other historical phenomenon", was equally sure however that its study would "contribute in various ways either positively or negatively, whether as a foundation or as an historical parallel, to a more profound insight into the problems of political economy both in the present and in the future" (10).

### **III: The Wretched Spirit of Monopoly**

What, then, is the significance for us today of Smith's critical analysis of mercantilism? The core of that critique was not simply an abstract economic analysis of the obstacles that mercantilism had erected to the functioning of a competitive market system, but rather a truly radical exposure of, and attack on, the very driving motivation inherent in mercantilism was quite simply that of the "wretched spirit of monopoly" (11) manifest principally, and most vigorously, by the merchants and manufacturers. While "national prejudice and animosity" (12) undoubtedly added fuel to the call for, and successful attainment of, mercantilist legislation, Smith had no hesitation in declaring it to be "prompted always by the private interest of particular traders" (13) nor in repeatedly excoriating the "impertinent jealousies of merchants and manufacturers", and their "mean rapacity, the monopolising spirit" (14). Thus he wrote:

"The principles which I have been examining took their origin from private interest and the spirit of monopoly ... That it was the spirit of monopoly which originally invented and propagated [the mercantilist] doctrine cannot be doubted, and they who first taught

it were by no means such fools as they who believe it." (15)

Smith's impassioned critique of mercantilism is so valuable precisely because its unblinkered and realistic exposure of the true character of what Professor Lipson called "Britain's first planned economy" can help us transcend one of the most orthodox, and disastrously misleading intellectual cliches in contemporary political economic discourse. This cliché, or myth, has both its "left-" and "right-wing" variants. In the former, the growth of government intervention in the economy is seen as being generated by the need to restrain the rapacities of business enterprise and hence as almost invariably serving the interest of the masses. In the latter it is seen as simply the product of socialist or communist influence and its fellow travellers, which will ultimately end in the erection of a monolithic state socialist tyranny.

If Smith's analysis had been kept in mind such simplistic mythology would surely never have taken root, let alone existed for so long. For only now have some historians and economists - and these almost wholly in America - begun to examine the true record of the growth of state interventionism. Initially, and significantly, it was the so-called "New Left" historians who, disillusioned by the fact that the various forms of state control and regulation had apparently failed to produce a more egalitarian, just or free society, took a fresh, and close, look at what had really occurred. And what they in fact discovered was that, facing market conditions which (contrary to the traditional view) were increasingly **more** competitive and "insecure", and with their eyes clearly set upon the privileges and profits that might be secured by the employment of state intervention, business interests both large and small had sought, encouraged, and utilised **socialist** ideas, movements and measures (16). A burgeoning stream of "revisionist" studies in economic and political history, emanating from scholars of all political colours and none, has largely confirmed the validity of this analysis (17). In economic theory, however, it has been those economists most directly in the Smithian, empirical, tradition, members of the so-called Chicago School like George J. Stigler (18) and, even more ambitiously, the "new institutional economics" of Buchanan and Tullock and their associates, who have analysed realistically the workings of "public choice" and the "political market".

#### IV: Neo-Mercantilism and Corporatism

However, in Britain only a handful of heterogeneous figures from journalism, economics and sociology, namely Samuel Brittan, Peter Jay, Patrick Hutber, Robert Moss, R. E. Pahl and Jack Winkler, have begun to transcend the orthodox images of both "left" and "right" to comprehend that the economic and political system presently emerging in the country cannot be understood in terms of either the ideals of social democracy or the harsh model of Soviet style state socialism (19). Instead, they have characterised it as the "corporate state". In the words of its most thorough analysts, Pahl and Winkler, it is:

"[A] comprehensive economic system under which the state intensively channels predominantly privately-owned business towards four goals ... Order, Unity, Nationalism and Success". (20)

And although Pahl and Winkler seem to conceive of this emergent corporatism as a "new form of political-economic organisation" (21) it should be clear that it would be hard to find anything more reminiscent of classic mercantilism: the pattern of the regulation and harmonising of various economic and functional interests to attain full employment and national prosperity. And what of the **reality** beneath the rhetoric of national unity and common interest? Once more, the "exclusive corporation spirit", the "wretched spirit of monopoly" which Smith had exposed (22) seems only too apparent. As Pahl and Winkler conclude from their research among a selected number of companies:

"Business leaders will hardly object to this kind of interventionism. Indeed, it is precisely what those in larger companies want - a protected environment while they get on with their job. What the directors of large companies do **not** want is **laissez-faire** competition. What they do want is capitalism without competition,



a combination of state support and private control. What they will accept is corporatism." (23)

Indeed, many firms, they discovered, were quite frank regarding their goals of price fixing and cartelisation and in their recognition of the "opportunity" inherent in state economic planning. One firm, they recounted, "willingly acted as an unofficial planning department for the government in drawing up longer-term investment and development plans for its industry, because it saw this as a way of manipulating policy decisions in the direction it favoured." (24)

## V: The Contemporary Corporate State

Since Pahl and Winkler wrote, the evidence adducible for the thesis that we are rapidly entering a period of "neo-mercantilism", a "corporate state", piles ever higher. The Confederation of British Industry engages in ceaseless consultations and agreements with the government of the day, and even the auspices of the **bete noire** of the businessmen, Anthony Wedgwood Benn (the alleged incarnation of "left wing" militancy), deterred few from participating in his recent National Energy Conference and demonstrating, as one report put it, their keenness "to secure stability rather than pursue competition" (25). The "lame ducks" of industry, like British Leyland, Chrysler, and Alfred Herbert dig ever deeper into the public purse, while the front-ranks of "free enterprise", like Babcock and Wilcox, Clarke and Chapman, Head Wrightson, G.E.C., and Reyrolle Parsons enter talks on "planning agreements"? - and their share of the growing fund (£550 million increased to £1,600 million) to aid industry under Section 8 of the Industry Act. And, as British industry becomes increasingly less willing and able to face the rigours of international competition, the cry against "unfair" competition and "dumping"? grows in volume.

Smith would have been well acquainted with the sophistry of "interested falsehood" manifest in the plea for protection against cheaper imports voiced by the chairman of one of the largest

textile manufacturers: "We are not looking for the taxpayers' money", he stated as he was in fact doing so. "All we are seeking is effective controls of imports. (26). The "impertinent jealousies of merchants and manufacturers" are hardly confined to the upper ranks of business, however. They are none the less apparent in the attempts of the taxi drivers to suppress their mini-cab competitors, in those of the private security and investigation firms which seek government regulation to "protect" the public by effectively banning entry into these professions, or in those of the small shopkeepers' union which sought the banning of mail order catalogues, trading stamps, supermarket "gimmicks" (glamour, soft lights, sweet music and attractive layout!) and bulk purchasing and storage in order to destroy their larger competitors.

The emerging corporate state is, of course, hardly identical in every feature with its classical mercantilist predecessors: a less reified concept of national prosperity and more humane concern for the actual material welfare of the great mass of the working population would be undeniable (although even this was not entirely absent from the mercantilist writings) (27). However, Smith would surely not have been surprised overmuch by the most significant difference between his time and ours - the immense growth in power and importance of organised labour. Smith had, of course, always been deeply concerned with the welfare of the largest proportion of the population and deeply critical of the "tacit combination" of employers to keep wages at their lowest. He was quite clear in his assertion that "whenever the legislature attempts to regulate the differences between masters and their workers, its counsellors are always the masters" (28) and indeed even declared that "when the regulation ... is in favour of the workmen it is always just and equitable; but it is sometimes otherwise when in favour of the masters." (29) But Smith had been equally well aware of the monopolistic role of the guilds, the restrictive practices of "(t)he trades, the crafts, the mysteries" (30) with their unnecessarily long apprenticeships and restrictions on entry, and equally critical of their "manifest encroachment upon the just liberty both of the workman and those who might be disposed to employ him" (31).

Contemporary self-righteous accusations of "union-bashing", living off the moral capital of

past injustices and legal disabilities, would not have deterred Smith, I am sure, from recognising their manifestations and exercise of the "exclusive corporation spirit" in a period when the balance of economic power, legal status and legislative influence are very different. (32) Moreover, the Marxist and Socialist doctrines of class unity and common interest among "the workers" would seem less a statement of social science than of normative political philosophy in the face of "impertinent jealousies" no less vigorous among those who sell their labour than those who sell any other product (33). The ceaseless disputes regarding lines of demarcation and wage differentials do not seem to be in decline and when, as of writing, a fierce dispute still rages between such unions as the National Union of Railwaymen, the Transport Workers' Union and the Shop Distributive and Allied Trades Union, seeking to protect the livelihood of their members against what they have called the "expansionism" of the dockers' attempts to extend the "dock work" classification to ever more unrelated and distant sites.

## **VI: Demystification and Political Economy**

Radical sociologists of the so-called "left" have frequently spoken of the role of their analysis as one of "demystifying" political and economic life, the necessary exposure of its true nature prior to reform or reconstruction in the interest of the mass of the people. It is our contention here that Smith's perspective is as relevant for our contemporary neo-mercantilism as it was for the mercantilism of his era. Smith's work indeed stands in direct contradiction to the audaciously bizarre accusation of one self-described "ultra-Keynesian" defender of neo-mercantilism, John Knapp, that the "classic" and "neo-classic" tradition cannot provide a true "political economy", a realistic and relevant analysis of the "social, political and other factors" involved in political-economic systems in either historical or contemporary periods (34). Unfortunately for Knapp and especially for his plea for a "relaxed and tolerant attitude" to the practitioners and theorists of the modern mercantilism, Smith's timely significance is precisely his achievement of such a political economy and its exposure of the dynamic of mercantilism as one of power, privilege and monopoly.

## VII: The Role of Value in Analysis

Certainly no one would abandon the heritage of **wertfreiheit** in economics and the social sciences, the **positive** analysis by - in the words of Kenneth Boulding - "escaping from the swaddling clothes of moral judgment ... tak[ing] off into the vast universe of 'is' [and] escaping from the treacherous launching pad of 'ought' (35). Yet as Boulding recognised, the ethical and normative dimensions of economics is ultimately inescapable, and, as even the most austere Austrian School exponents of "aprioristic" methodology and the "pure logic of choice" have argued, a **political economy** is essential to an understanding of the social fabric as a **whole** (36). Writing in 1869, Professor James E. Thorold Rogers, an eminent but now forgotten disciple of Smith, wrote that "Smith's political economy was a war against privilege and monopoly, as all honest political economy is, whether it be privilege on the part of the landlords or masters, peasants or workmen" (37). In a era of Eastern state socialism which hides a bureaucratic-military-technocratic "new class" behind a mask of "proletarian" and egalitarian rhetoric of national interest and social democracy, it is the task of **demystification**, wedded to "the liberal plan of equality, liberty and justice" (38) that seems most urgently relevant - and so radical - today. For those of us who consider ourselves radicals, Smith would indeed seem to offer a better guide than Marx, and the market mechanism appears increasingly vindicated as a progressive and humane social form. Smith's "obvious and simple system of natural liberty" (39) is not (as indeed it was not in **The Wealth of Nations** itself) quite as simple as the phrase might suggest. Smith certainly never assumed any **spontaneous** identity of interests in the absence of government restrictions, and part of the unifying theme of his great work was precisely the way in which some institutions would channel human self-interest in a socially beneficial way and others (such as, but not solely, mercantilism) would not (40). The exact character of the institutional framework best suited to this age (Smith was always aware of the changing historical context) is outside the scope of this essay, and Smith can hardly be blamed for not providing a map when he certainly did provide a compass.

## VIII: Conclusion: The Market Versus the Present Establishments

In **The Political Economy of the New Left** (41) Professor Assar Lindbeck has argued that many of the "new radicals" in the "New Left", disenchanted with the bureaucratic and coercive structures of both East and West, had ultimately to face a choice between two mutually exclusive social options, between the market economy and the command economy. Many of those whose motivation was **truly** one of "equality, liberty and justice" have indeed made such a choice and, like ex-SDS activist and Harvard philosophy professor, Robert Nozick, have opted for the market as a **utopian** ideal (42). It would indeed be a further irony of history if, 200 years after the publication of **The Wealth of Nations**, we were not only faced with the emergence of "present establishments" that so closely resembled those of Smith's time but also with the possible emergence of a new radicalism which would attack that system in the same market-oriented and liberal terms as Smith.

### NOTES

1. In his general introduction to the Cambridge Economic Handbooks. See "Introduction" to Hubert D. Henderson, **Supply and Demand**, Cambridge Economic Handbooks No. 1, Nisbet, London & Cambridge University Press, 1922, p. v. Keynes also added that "Before Adam Smith this apparatus of thought scarcely existed".
2. Quoted by A. S. Skinner, "Adam Smith: An Economic Interpretation of History", in Skinner, A. S. & Wilson, T., eds., **Essays on Adam Smith**, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, p. 155.
3. For the Marxist view see Ronald L. Meek, "The Scottish Contribution to Marxist Sociology", in Idem, **Economics and Ideology**, Chapman and Hall, London, 1967. For the non-Marxist view see Duncan Forbes, "Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce

and Liberty", in Skinner and Wilson, **op cit**.

4. Most notably in Books III and IV and the beginning of Book V.
5. Chapter 23, "Notes on Mercantilism ...", especially pp. 331-351, **The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money**, The Collected Works, Macmillan, London, 1973.
6. Cambridge University Press, 1966. Robinson, of course, approves. For critical views see Harry G. Johnson, "Mercantilism: Past, Present and Future", in Idem, **On Economics and Society**, University of Chicago Press, 1975; Murray N. Rothbard, "Money, the State and Modern Mercantilism", in Helmut Schoeck and Helmut Wiggins, eds., **Central Planning and Neo-Mercantilism**, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1964; Chiaki Nishiyama, "The End of Neo-Mercantilism", paper delivered to The Mont Pelerin Society Conference, 1960; Deepak Lal, "The Wistful Mercantilism of Mr. Dell", **The World Economy**, June 1978; Samuel Brittan, "The Model of a Modern Mercantilist", **The Financial times**, 5 May 1977. A critical Marxist comment on neo-mercantilism can be found in M. Beer, **Fifty Years of International Socialism**, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1935, pp. 226-7, 236.
7. E. Lipson, **The Economic History of England, Vol. II: The Age of Mercantilism**, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1931, p. xi. And see also the important but neglected study by Edgar S. Furniss, **The Position of the Labourer in a System of Nationalism: A Study in the Labour Theories of the Later English Mercantilists**, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1920, which criticises the "disproportionate" degree of attention focussed on the external commercial policies of mercantilism to the detriment of the "vast body of theory and policy dealing with the domestic economy of the nation", p. 3.

8. **Europe 1914-1939**, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1944
9. E. Lipson, **A Planned Economy or Free Enterprise: The Lessons of History**, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1944.
10. Eli F. Heckscher, **Mercantilism**, George Allen and Unwin, London, Rev. 2nd edn, 1955, Vol. II, p. 406.
11. Adam Smith, **An Inquiry Into the Nature and the Causes of The Wealth of Nations**, J. M. Dent, London, Vol. I, p. 406.
12. **Ibid**, p. 417
13. **Ibid**, p. 418.
14. **Ibid**, p. 436.
15. **Ibid**, p. pp. 417, 436.
16. See in particular, Gabriel Kolko, **The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916**, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1963; Idem, **Railroads and Regulation, 1877-1916**, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1965; James Weinstein, **The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918**, Beacon Press, Boston, 1968; Ronald Radosh and Murray N. Rothbard, eds., **A New History of Leviathan**, E. P. Dutton, new York, 1972.
17. Among a vast number see, for example, Samuel P. Hays, "The Social Analysis of American Political History", **Political Science Quarterly**, September 1965; Robert Weibe, **Businessmen and Reform**, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1968; E. K. Hunt,

- "A Neglected Aspect of the Economic Ideology of the Early New Deal", **Review of Social Economy**, September 1971; and S. P. Caine, **The Myth of a Progressive Reform**, State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin, 1970.
18. Stigler, "Director's Law of Public Income Redistribution", **Journal of Law and Economics** (University of Chicago), April 1970; Idem, "The Theory of Economic Regulation", **Bell Journal of Economics and Management Science**, Spring 1971.
19. Samuel Brittan, "Towards a Corporate State?", **Encounter**, June 1975; Peter Jay, "The Biter Bit; or The Apotheosis of Corporatism", **The Times**, 25 March 1976; Patrick Hutber, "CBI - The Case for Abolition", **The Sunday Telegraph**; Robert Moss, **The Collapse of Democracy**, Maurice Temple Smith, London, 1976, p. 100; Idem, "How Long Before the TUC Stormtroopers Rule Westminster?", **The Daily Mail**, 16 February 1976; R. E. Pahl and Jack Winkler, "The Coming Corporatism", **New Society**, 10 October 1974; Idem, "Corporatism in Britain...", **The Times**, 26 February 1976; Idem, "Corporatism in Britain", in A. R. Isserlis, ed., **The Corporate State: Reality or Myth?**, Centre for Studies in Social Policy, London, 1972; Jack Winkler, **Corporatism**, Discussion Paper No. 2, The Seminar Series on Major Social and Economic Problems in the UK, Centre for Environmental Studies, London, February 1976. The most recent defence of corporatism can be found in Harold Wilensky, **The New Corporatism**, Sage Publications, London, 1978.
20. Pahl and Winkler, "The Coming Corporatism", **op cit**, p. 72.
21. **Ibid**, p. 72, my emphasis. While we may lack the detailed "revisionist" historical analysis that has take place in America, even a cursory glance at the record would indicate that the affinity of business for state regulation is very far from a "new" phenomenon and certainly not restricted simply to "hard times" as Pahl and Winkler suggest - unless "hard times" is taken as a synonym for any degree of



competitiveness in the economy!. In an unfortunately neglected essay in **The Manchester School**, XIV(1), January 1946, pp. 53-71, just after the war, "Planning and Economic Privilege", George Schwartz characterised the inter-war period as one of "sectional" planning supported by all ranks of business in their common search for "discrimination against sections of producers, or against sections of consumers" (p. 63). And in the post-war period a number of market-oriented economists were to excoriate the structure of the "restrictive society" which had been erected in the struggle for special privilege by interest groups ranging from the building trades to the "genteel" closed shops of the upper- and middle-classes - the "Professions". See John A. Lincoln, **The Restrictive Society**, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1967; F. Knox and I. Henessey, **Restrictive Practices in the Building Industry**, Research Monograph 1, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1966; D. S. Lees, **Economic Consequences of the Professions**, Research Monograph 2, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1966.

22. Smith, **The Wealth of Nations**, Vol. I, **op cit**, p. 406.
23. Pahl and Winkler, "The Coming Corporatism", **op cit**, pp. 73,75.
24. **Ibid**, p. 75.
25. "After Bennday", **New Society**, July 1976.
26. Quoted by Nicholas Bilitch, "Back to 1776 - A Tribute to a Canny Scot", **Land and Liberty** (London), May/June 1976, p. 43.
27. Compare Furniss, **The Position of the Labourer**, **op cit**, p. 178 with Charles Wilson, "The Other Face of Mercantilism", in D. C. Coleman, ed., **Revisions in Mercantilism**, Methuen, London, 1969. The ceaseless contemporary political sermons urging "belt tightening" and sacrifice upon the populace stimulates one to wonder just

how much we might be returning to the classical mercantilist model. Pahl and Winkler certainly comment that in the corporate state "national economic performance has moral primacy over personal affluence or mobility", "Corporatism in Britain", **op cit**.

28. Smith, **The Wealth of Nations**, Vol. I, **op cit**, p. 129.
29. **Ibid**, p. 129.
30. **Ibid**, 112.
31. **Ibid**, p. 110.
32. See John A. Lincoln, **Journey to Coercion**, Polar Paperback, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1969 and Charles G. Hanson, **Trade Unions: A Century of Privilege?**, Occasional Paper 38, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1973.
33. For a more recent, but unfortunately similarly unpursued example of realistic class analysis see Lionel Robbins, **The Economic Basis of Class Conflict**, Macmillan, London, 1939.
34. John Knapp, "Economics or Political Economy?", **Lloyds Bank Review** (London), January 1973.
35. Kenneth E. Boulding, "Economics as a Moral Science", **American Economic Review**, March 1969, p. 1.
36. Walter E. Grinder and John Hagel III, "The Lost Art of Political Economy: An Explanatory Note" and "Towards a Theory of State Capitalism: Ultimate Decision-Making and Class Structure", papers delivered at the Second Libertarian

Scholars' Conference, New York, October 1974.

37. James E. Thorold Rogers, **Historical Gleanings**, First Series, Macmillan, London, 1969, p. 123.
38. Smith, **The Wealth of Nations**, *op cit*, p. 180.
39. **Ibid**, p. 180.
40. Nathan Rosenberg, "Some Institutional Aspects of the 'Wealth of Nations'", **Journal of Political Economy**, December 160.
41. Assar Lindbeck, **The Political Economy of the New Left: An Outsider's View**, Harper and Row, New York, 1971.
42. In his much discussed work **Anarchy, State and Utopia**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1974, Nozick portrays and defends the classical liberal conception of the minimal state as a progressive and utopian ideal.

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**Textual Note:** Some minor stylistic alterations have been made, and sub-headings have been added.

## 6: CHANGE AND PSEUDO-CHANGE IN SOCIOLOGY

### Contents:

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  - III: Freudian Fallacies
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The last decade has clearly witnessed the shattering of the sociological consensus. We seem far removed from the time when, in 1954, Ely Chinoy could declare that "the days of competing schools, each employing a distinct conceptual apparatus, are almost gone" (1) or even from Donald MacRae's statement, in 1968, that an intellectual "lull", a sociological "unity" had been achieved, and only "a long period of logical refinement, and cleaning-up operations awaits us" (2). Instead, what has occurred has been the explosive emergence of a myriad competing claimants to the mantle of revolution or "paradigm change" in sociology. Phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic-interactionism, critical theory, "new", "reflexive", "radical", and "humanistic" sociologies have all laid claim to the honour of being the agent of transformation. Yet, while noting their common elements, a commitment to "liberation", to "self-determination" and to various views of individual autonomy against "social forces", it is

necessary to observe, as one self-proclaimed "humanistic sociologist" has indeed done, that:

"it is not clear at all ... how the various 'elements', or, better, manifestations [of the "great first-order fissure" in contemporary sociology] cohere or are even compatible: the 'radicalism' and struggle-orientation-even-unto-violence-if-need-be of some, with the dignity-preservation- for-all at almost any cost to others; the roles of prophet, soldier, healer, light-bringer ... leader, planner, liberator, and - can it be? - controller." (3)

To what extent does the smoke of a somewhat self-satisfied bandying of new jargon and labels conceal the absence of any real fire of change? To what extent does allegedly revolutionary disputation with the orthodox tradition actually share with that tradition a cumulative background of ideas and numerous fundamental assumptions? - as Ernest Becker has queried with reference to similar conflicts in the past (4). How far has **real** change occurred?

### **I: Dennis Wrong's "Skeptical Sociology"**

Dennis Wrong's **Skeptical Sociology** (Heinemann, London, 1977; subsequent bracketed page numbers refer to this work) is no mere late-comer to the ranks of contenders for the 'revolutionary' honours. Wrong has been a distinguished and long-standing (if insufficiently known in Britain) contributor to the growing stream of criticism of the structural-functional orthodoxy. This book thus gathers together most of his major published essays, dating from 1959, along with a number of previously unpublished items. Ranging in character from scholarly polemics to serious contributions on major issues in sociological theory and general discussions of diverse topics in politics and political theory. They present us with a timely illustration of the general direction of the 'new' and 'humanist' streams of thought, and numerous ('reflexive'!) reflections on the actual diversity of such intellectual currents. In examining the char-

acter of Wrong's own work, his observations on contemporary sociology, and the questions he both raises and fails to raise, we can go some way in assessing the true status of the 'new sociologies'.

## II: Human Nature and Individual Autonomy

In perhaps the most valuable section of the book, the "Prologue" and Part One on "Human Nature and the Perspective of Sociology", Wrong provides a much needed criticism of some fashionable trends. An established critic of the positivism and "scientism" of structural functionalism, he explains his reasons for no longer calling his own view "humanistic" - not the least of which is its "self-congratulatory aura" (p. 2) and its use as a "virtual synonym for an engage sociology aligned politically with the Left" (p. 2). Although indeed (in American terms) a "liberal" and "a man of the left", Wrong does not hesitate to proffer some biting criticism of the so-called "Critical Theory" of the Frankfurt School and its followers. Not a few will welcome his declaration that the "critical theorists" possess no monopoly on the "reflexive" perspective, the critique of positivism, a critical perspective on the **status quo**, or on adherence to a "utopian' vision". That critical theory's criticism seems remarkably parochial and one-sided, focused principally on the West and ignoring the conditions in socialist and Marxist states whose existence (whatever the status of their claims to such titles) poses certain analytical problems, is a point all too infrequently raised. Wrong's comments on "the increasingly shadowy contours of 'socialism' as an ideal", its use as a "god-term" (p. 9), and likewise his sad observation that Marxism is now "surely the most trendy tendency in the sociological academy" (p. 51) will provide a courageous and refreshing exercise in intellectual scepticism and independence for those who have read the voluminous "radical" writings and experienced their growing concrete influence.

The core of Wrong's work, however, and indeed his most well-known contribution to the critique of structural-functionalism, is "The Over-Socialized Conception of Man in Modern

Sociology". This essay, his "Postscript" to it, and its companion piece, "Human Nature and the Perspective of Sociology", constitutes perhaps the most telling and well-reasoned criticism of the holistic and deterministic outlook of conventional sociology. The latter's "model of human nature, sometimes clearly stated, more often implicit in accepted concepts" (p.35) is one of man as overwhelmingly an "acceptance seeker", a passive internaliser of external social norms. Wrong does not, of course, deny the social nature of man, the existence of the "vexatious fact of society" (to use Dahrendorf's phrase) but objects rather to the generalizing of a "particular selective emphasis", and the subsequent "extremely one-sided view of human nature" (p. 41), while ignoring or minimizing the "obvious and massive fact" (p. 62) of human choice and autonomy.

Much of this critique, the appreciation of a far greater degree of human autonomy than was ever recognized by even the most "balanced" of the older sociologists, is now, with the growth of varied "humanistic" trends in sociology, anthropology, and psychology, quite widely accepted (5) - although Wrong's view of it as largely "absorbed into the conventional wisdom of the discipline" (p. 47) surely goes too far and begs a great many questions. What is particularly noteworthy at this moment, however, is Wrong's recognition of the extent to which many of the "new" sociologies still share much of the traditional, deterministic image of man. Thus, symbolic interactionism, in spite of its stress on the **role-making** aspects of human interaction and its perceptive "readings" of the realities of social intercourse, draws heavily on the work of George Herbert Mead and Harry Stack Sullivan, both of whom present a concept of the self characterized by a distinct "lack of any motivational energies of its own" (p.66), as a "social self", the product of "the reflected appraisals of others" (Sullivan) and the internalizing of the "generalized other" (Mead) (6). As Wrong puts it:

"Symbolic interactionists are not guilty ... of suggesting that men are conformist automatons ... Nevertheless [they] still see resistance to social demands and expectations as essentially a by-product, though an inevitable one, of socialization. The

essence of man is 'the presentation of self in everyday life', even though it is recognized that the social world is discontinuous and permits some individuality and some resistance to social control to flourish in the interstices between rules and institutions. Instead of [as in structural-functionalism] successful 'tension management' imposed by the imperative of the social system, 'impression management' under the dominance of the self, a theatrical impresario cannily sizing up his audience, becomes the compelling social reality. Both views, though in different ways, present an oversocialized conception of man." (p. 67)

Similarly, much of the work of "radical" and anti-functionalist "conflict theorists" adopts either vague concepts of the dynamics of "objective conditions" and conflicting "interests" (which actually need further psychological explication) and Marxist reifications of class and history, or other views equally as holistic and deterministic as those of the functionalists. "Their denial that society is a self-equilibrating system in the structural-functionalist sense", Wrong writes, "merely leads them to stress socialization in subgroups within total societies that are at odds with one another, as opposed to being united by an overarching, shared value system" (p. 60). The most notable example of the latter, of course, is that of Gerth and Mills who, in **Character and Social Structure**, "subscribed to conceptions of socialization that scarcely differed from those of Parsons and his fellow functionalists" (p. 48). (7)

On the subject of C. Wright Mills, Wrong in fact includes a full essay, an appraisal of "C. Wright Mills and the Sociological Imagination", which contains a number of critical observations on the hero and inspiration of much "radical' sociology", regarding whom a certain degree of "demystification" is certainly long overdue. While justly praising **The Sociological Imagination**, Wrong points to "the striking discrepancy between Mills' own work and [his] admirable conception of what sociology ought to be ..." (p. 28). Thus, much of Mills' work is actually characterized by its lack of an historical and comparative perspective, an absence of a



truly rigorous reasoning to follow up imaginative insights and suggestions (most notably in his work on the power elite, where it was left to others to really clinch the case against "pluralism"), and the "grand theory" orientation of **Character And Social Structure**. It is a pity that Wrong does not include here his equally important and biting **political** observations, made in **Partisan Review**, regarding the statist and authoritarian inclinations of Mills (8).

### **III: Freudian Fallacies**

Unfortunately, however, much of Wrong's own alternative conception of human psychology is drawn from Freudianism, emphasising the "somatic, animal roots of our emotional lives" (p. 54). Here Wrong is open to the same sort of criticism he has made of Gerth and Mills, that he is subjecting Man to simply another form of determinism. He is not only apparently unaware of the devastating criticisms of Freudianism available (9), and the extent of its predominantly deterministic nature (10), but neglects the large body of "humanist" or "third force" psychology. The writings of the latter movement provide detailed and well-reasoned concepts of human nature ("social, but not entirely socialized"), and of the limits of socialization (11). Wrong's knowledge of the burgeoning humanistic movement in psychology seems, alas, confined to some of the more anti-rational group psychotherapies distinguished (as he rightly points out) by anti-individualistic celebrations of group-induced emotion and of public self-exposure (p. 2). (12)

### **IV: The Sociological Bias**

In the last two essays of this section, "The Idea of Community: A Critique" and "Identity: Problem and Catchword", Wrong makes a number of valid criticisms of two widely used concepts and of the prospects of measures aimed at the restoration of "community" and secure "identity". Unfortunately, he fails to get to grips with the issue of their true scientific status

and its significance for sociology. Herein we thus find a further example of the limits of the critique of traditional sociology. Although well aware of Nisbet's famous work on the conservative-collectivist origins of sociology (13), and citing Leon Bramson's less well-known, but important, **The Political Context of Sociology** (14), Wrong does not subject these two central concepts to a truly critical analysis - indeed, he even seems to share, to a degree, their holistic-collectivist assumptions regarding the alleged need for rootedness, stability, and socially guaranteed identity. Yet such sociological concepts and theories rest, as Bramson pointed out, "not on empirical research alone, but on a specifically anti-liberal [i.e. anti-individualist] philosophical approach to modern society". They are "derived from a number of assumptions concerning modern society few of them proven or even provable by scientific methods ... they do not involve questions of fact, but rather, questions of fact structured by and saturated with values. They resemble philosophical rather than scientific propositions" (15). Bramson illustrated his thesis by reference to "mass society and culture" theory. A great deal of contemporary work in urban sociology has similarly demonstrated the inadequacy of what have proved to be essentially normative and holistic concepts in this area.

## **V: Power, Conflict and Change**

The essays in Part Two provide generally penetrating contributions to the criticism of structural-functionalism for its neglect of power, group conflict, and historical change - very well trodden ground by now, of course, if less so when originally published. Wrong's essentially Weberian analysis provides a sound explication of concepts (especially in "Social Inequality Without Social Stratification", re-affirming with welcome clarity a number of distinctions that are (as he says) widely, if not always clearly, recognized in theory while often ignored in research practice, and underlining the continued relevance of these concepts and distinctions to the understanding of contemporary social trends. Unfortunately, however, while Wrong is himself well aware of the danger in "retracing familiar ground", of "perpetuating the larger failure of so much contemporary sociological theory to overcome its purely definitional charac-

ter, its tendency to produce a distinctive nomenclature rather than significant propositions about social reality" (p. 121), and stresses "that conceptual analysis should lead directly into the elucidation of social processes and historical trends with which we are directly familiar" (p. 121), his own work still pays virtually no attention to the real structure and dynamics of power and privilege in contemporary America (16). It is a serious reproach to sociology that virtually every major empirical contribution to our knowledge of the realities of power has come from outside the sociological profession, whether from "New Left" historians and writers, "right wing" conspiratorialists, or radical libertarian economists and theorists (17).

The final section of the book is - as the author admits - a somewhat more heterogeneous collection of essays united only superficially in their concern with varied issues of "Power and Politics", they range from relatively theoretical discussions, through a criticism of Robert Heilbroner (one of America's leading contemporary socio-economic Cassandras), to a celebratory introduction to Weber and an explication of "Ends and Means in Politics". It also contains perhaps the weakest essay (although one of Wrong's self-proclaimed favourites) on "The Rhythm of Democratic Politics", in which he delineates the thesis that "democratic societies ... experience a cyclical alteration of periods dominated by protest from the Left and retrenchment by the Right" (p. 226). Wrong, however, offers no real analysis of, or justification for, these misleading, vague and emotive terms which, as his own essay actually demonstrates, beg so many questions and function as semantic weapons by which an ideology can lay claim to virtue and label its rival opprobriously. It is again a cause for reproach that neither sociology nor political science has produced systematic and convincing analyses of this common categorization. Once more it has been left to journalists, academics in other disciplines, or activists, who feel such loaded stereotypes do no justice to their own beliefs, to engage in such tasks (18). That this essay originally appeared in a volume, **The New Conservatives: A Critique from the Left** (19), intended as a counterblast to the works of a group of writers also frequently termed revisionist "liberals" - men of undoubtedly scholarly objectivity whose analysis and policy prescriptions were distinguished by a growing disillusionment with the failure of traditional so-called "leftist" (that is, state interventionist or socialist) policies - surely indicates how

value-laden such categorization and terminology can be.

## VI: Monica Morris' "Creative Sociology"

Monica B. Morris' *An Excursion Into Creative Sociology* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1977; subsequent bracketed page numbers refer to this work) provides an interesting contrast to Wrong's work, while serving to underline many of the points I have made so far. An admittedly partisan work, it is designed to serve as a relatively comprehensible introduction to the range of phenomenological, ethnomethodological, and interactionist perspectives she designates as "creative sociology". Their common character, in her view, is that:

"[A]ll have an image of human beings as creating reality in interaction with others. They all call into question the deterministic notion that the 'solid structures' of society act as forces on the individual, deciding his fate. They all use methods of study that are different from the natural-science methods of positivistic sociology." (p. 42)

However, that an introduction, a "simplification" and demystification, even, of such streams of thought should prove necessary constitutes more than a little reproach to their proponents. As she points out, they "present their programmatic statements in language so obscure that many readers become quickly confused, frustrated and discouraged. Terminology is introduced that is far from self-explanatory, sentences are tortuous, much chaff surrounds the wheat of wisdom that awaits those patient enough to sift through the terrible wordiness" (p. viii). Indeed! Moreover, much of the jargon is quite indefensible (do we **really** need to call objectivity, open-mindedness or absence of presuppositions, "performing the epoche", "bracketing", or "reduction"?), masks either repetition, prolixity, and assertion (rather than validation), or simplicity, banality, and truism (20) which is anything but "profoundly complex" (p. viii).

In fact, Morris performs her self-appointed task remarkably well. She delineates the principal achievements of the "creative" sociologies, their analysis of "the amazingly ordinary phenomenon of daily life" (p. ix), the structure and tactics of ordinary language and discourse, with facility. Her account of her own research into the justifications by newspaper editors of the nature of their treatment of the Women's Liberation Movement (pp. 108-114) is particularly incisive and interesting, as is her description of the work of Fishman, West and Zimmerman, and Cicourel and Kitsuse on the role of expectation and linguistic conflict in ordinary life. Yet, while noting the differences among the various "creative" sociologies, Morris is too expository and insufficiently analytical. To what extent does "creative sociology" depart from the core assumptions of the traditional paradigm? Her account of Mead shows no recognition of the deterministic orientation of his work, although she does note that Berger and Luckmann's work "appears to smack considerably more of social determinism than do other phenomenological approaches" (p. 59) and cites Jack Douglas's comments that "in the grafting of structural ideas onto situational analyses, Berger and Luckmann have largely denied the necessary freedom of individuals implicit in the whole idea of situated meaning and have reinstated the 'objectified' absolutist tyranny of the structuralists" (p. 166). The question she fails to ask is, to what extent the "creative sociologies" have either disposed of the "deterministic notion" or adequately and systematically dealt with the exact limits of socialization and social constraints. Her failure in this respect is that of "creative sociology" as a whole. Peter Berger's **Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective** (21) for example, presents no more (probably less) of a systematic discussion of the role and limits of socialization and the status of **homo sociologicus** than did Ralf Dahrendorf in his famous essay "Homo Sociologicus" and its postscript, "Sociology and Human Nature" (22).

## VII: Change and Pseudo-Change

Both Wrong and Morris leave us, then, if not with any **direct** answer to our initial question - how far has real change occurred in contemporary sociology? - at least with a clearer picture of the points at issue and of their significance. If the new trends in sociology represent manifestations of a "view of man as having a measure of autonomy, choice and self-determination" (23), **what** is the extent of that choice and at what point does it constitute a quantum jump from the traditional sociological view? To what extent, moreover, does sociology **qua** science necessarily focus on the "socialization" process, or depend upon **homo sociologicus** as either an allegedly true representation of human nature or a self-conscious construct, a heuristic tool? And to what extent do the "humanistic" propositions either constitute or need to be developed into, a new "paradigm"? Wrong at least indicates implicitly his attitude when he declares that he has "no intention of creating a new movement or tendency within sociology". In his view "sceptical sociologists may wryly recognize a kinship with one another under various disguises, but it would be self-defeating for them to organize as a group or even to adopt a common label. In the end, there can be no such thing as a sceptical sociology, only sceptical sociologists" (p. 14).

For those, however, whose skepticism goes further, who adhere to a much broader rejection of the holistic and determinist concepts and values inherited by sociology from classical conservatism (and reinforced by the more collectivist varieties of socialism), a different task lies ahead. In perhaps the most forthright and successful attempt so far to outline a voluntaristic or individualistic sociology, that of Dick Atkinson (24), we find a clear recognition that many of the "critics and dissenters, the advocates of an alternative, radical sociology [are] in fact ... part of the orthodox consensus", and that this is a measure of the crisis facing sociology and students of sociology (25). If a thoroughly new sociological paradigm is to emerge, a sociology that is a "science of liberty", methodologically, psychologically, and normatively individualistic, then a great deal more radical thought and change will have to take place.

## NOTES

1. Ely Chinoy, **Sociological Perspective: Basic Concepts and Their Application**, Random House, New York, 1945, p. iv.
2. David G. MacRae, "Introduction" to Percy S. Cohen, **Modern Social Theory**, Heinemann, London, 1968, p. viii.
3. John R. Seeley, "Humanizing the Superconscious: A Foreword to 'Humanistic Society' and a Prelude to a Humane Society" in John F. Glass and John R. Staude, eds., **Humanistic Society: Today's Challenge to Sociology**, Goodyear Publishing, Pacific Palisades, California, 1972, p. xvi.
4. Ernest Becker, **The Structure of Evil: An Essay on the Unification of the Science of Man**, George Braziller, New York, 1968, p. 403, Note 1.
5. For useful summaries of, and introductions to, such trends, see Fred W. Voget, "Man and Culture: An Essay in Changing Anthropological Interpretations", **American Anthropologist**, (26)6, December 1960 and Mary Ellen Goodman, **The Individual and Culture**, The Dorsey Press, Homewood, Illinois, 1967.
6. A similar recognition of the rather grim and deterministic image of man in ethnomethodology can be found in John F. Glass, "The Humanistic Challenge to Sociology" in Glass and Staude, **op. cit.**, p.4.
7. Another criticism of Gerth and Mill's holism and determinism can be found in the important but neglected essay by Benjamin Schwartz, "The Socio-Historic Approach", **World Politics**, VIII(1), October 1955, especially pp. 141-43. Schwartz points out that in their work the person is "nothing more than a combination of internalized social

roles which, in turn, are part of the social process" (p. 141). Alastair MacIntyre, in "Breaking the Chains of Reason", in E. P. Thomson, ed., **Out of Apathy**, New Left Books, Stevens & Sons, London, 1960, also accuses Mills of sharing, with Parsons, "the deterministic vision of man" and giving, in his work, "no picture ... of the resistances that man can and does offer to such processes" (p. 224).

8. In "Reading from Left to Right", **Partisan Review**, XXX(2), Summer 1963, Wrong quoted extensively from Mills' selected essays, **Power, Politics and People**, to illustrate the obvious attraction power, when wielded by the correct, enlightened hands, held for him. He thus concluded that "Mills sometimes sounds as though what he most wanted was to be President of the United States. Long before he became briefly an apologist for Castro's dictatorship and began to give Krushchev's Russia the benefit of too many doubts, there was an unpleasant note in his preoccupation with power: he never tired of blasting the 'power elite', but he had a strange mixture of contempt for their intellectual mediocrity with a desire to stand in their shoes, and this feeling seemed to occupy him more than did his vision of a more fraternal, decentralized society" (p. 296).
9. For example, Andrew Salter, **The Case Against Psychoanalysis**, Henry Holt, New York, 1952/Medical Publications, London, 1953; Richard LaPiere, **The Freudian Ethic**, Duell, Sloan & Pearce, New York, 1959; Sebastian de Grazia, **Errors of Psychotherapy**, Doubleday, New York, 1952; Coyne H. Campbell, **Induced Delusions: The Psychopathy of Freudism**, Regent House, Chicago, 1958; and Maurice Natenberg, **The Case History of Sigmund Freud**, Regent House, Chicago, 1958. The telling arguments of such writers, of course, do not necessarily vindicate their own alternative propositions.
10. See Isidore Chein, **The Science of Behaviour and the Image of Man**, Basic Books, New York, 1972/Tavistock Publications, London, 1972. Chein observes that "this





model [i.e. Freudianism] commonly thought of as a purposive one, leaves Man a passive victim of the interplay between constitution and environment no less than do the non-purposive stimulus-response models. Man, as such, has nothing to do with the outcome. He does nothing; things happen to him" (p. 6).

11. Among a large and growing number, see especially the work of Abraham Maslow, in **Motivation and Personality**, Harper Brothers, New York, 1954, and **Toward A Psychology of Being**, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, N.J., 1968; Frank G. Goble, **The Third Force: The Psychology of Abraham Maslow**, Grossman, New York, 1970/Victor Gollancz, London, 1972, for a general over-view; and Nathaniel Branden, **The Psychology of Self-Esteem**, Nash Publishing, Los Angeles, 1969, especially his discussion of "volitional consciousness", pp. 36-63.
12. Similar criticisms of such anti-rational tendencies and advocacy of total public self-revelation have been made repeatedly by writers **within** the humanist tradition itself. See, for example, Nathaniel Branden, **The Disowned Self**, Nash Publishing, Los Angeles, 1977, pp. 127-28, 159, and Sigmund Koch, "Reflections on the State of Psychology", **Social Research**, 38(4), Winter, 1971. Koch especially points to the "ultimate theory of man as a socius" (p. 706), inherent in the ideas of such alleged humanists.
13. Robert A. Nisbet, "Conservatism and Sociology", **American Journal of Sociology**, LVII(2), September 1952; Idem "The French Revolution and the Rise of Sociology", Idem, **American Journal of Sociology**, XLIX(2), September 1943; Idem "De Bonald and the Concept of the Social Group", **Journal of the History of Ideas**, V(3), June 1944; Idem, **The Sociological Tradition**, Basic Books, New York, 1967, 1970.
14. Leon Bramson, **The Political Context of Sociology**, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1961; 2nd edn, 1966.

15. **Ibid.**, pp. 43-44.
16. It should be noted that he does include some more concrete material in his review article "Jews, Gentiles, and the New Establishment", and in "How Important is Social Class?", on the extent of ethnic loyalties among American "workers".
17. For the New Left, for example, see Gabriel Kolko, **The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916**, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1963; James Weinstein, **The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State: 1900-1918**, Beacon Press, Boston, 1968; William Domhoff, **The Higher Circles: The Governing Class in America**, Random House, New York, 1971; Idem **Fat Cats and Democrats: The Power of the Big Rich in the Party of the Common Man**, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972; Idem, **The Bohemian Grove and Other Retreats: A Study in Ruling-Class Cohesiveness**, Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, New York, 1975. For the so-called "right wing" conspiratorialists see, for example, by Garry Allen, **None Dare Call it Conspiracy**, Concorde Press, Rossmore, California, 1971; **The Rockefeller File**, Concord Press, Seal Beach, California, 1976; and **Who Controls the Press?**, The John Birch Society, Belmont, Massachusetts, 1965. For the radical libertarians see, for example, Richard M. Ebeling, ed., **The Political Economy of Liberal Corporatism**, Centre for Libertarian Studies, New York, 1977, and Murray N. Rothbard and Ronald Radosh, eds., **A New History of Leviathan**, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1972.
18. Thus, see Sam Brittan, **Left and Right: The Bogus Dilemma**, Secker & Warburg, London, 1968, and his "Further Thoughts on Left and Right", Idem, **Capitalism and the Permissive Society**, Macmillan, London, 1973; Murray N. Rothbard, "Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty", in Tibor Machan, ed., **The Libertarian Alternative: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy**, Nelson Hall, Chicago, 1974; Jerome

Tuccille, **Radical Libertarianism: A New Political Alternative**, 2nd edn, Bobbs-Merrill, New York. 1971, especially pp. ix-xix; Lawrence McGann, "The Political Spectrum", **Rampart Journal** (Rampart College, Larkspur, Colorado), III(4), Winter 1967, and the symposium on the subject in the same journal, IV(2), Summer 1968.

19. Lewis A. Coser and Irving Howe, eds., **The New Conservatives: A Critique from the Left**, Quadrangle Books, New York, 1974.
20. See Stanislaw Andreski's biting comments in **Social Sciences as Sorcery**, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1974, pp. 246-48, and his general explanation for the prevalence of such pomposity and obscurantism, *passim*.
21. Peter Berger, **Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective**, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1966.
22. Ralf Dahrendorf, **Homo Sociologicus**, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1973.
23. Glass and Staude, *op. cit.*, p. xi.
24. Dick Atkinson, **Orthodox Consensus and Radical Alternative: A Study in Sociological Theory**, Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1971.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

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**Textual Note:** A few minor grammatical and stylistic alterations have been made.

## 7: MAN, CONCEPTS AND SOCIETY

### Contents:

- I: Situational Logic
  - II: Concepts and Class
  - III: Against Social Determinism
  - IV: Conditioning or Contexts?
- Notes

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Professor I. C. Jarvie's **Concepts and Society** (1) is a rare and pleasing phenomenon in contemporary academic sociology: it is an exposition of the doctrine of methodological individualism, one of the major foundations of both liberal sociology and the "Austrian School" of Economics and its "praxeological" approach (2). Its author has thus produced a work which, thematically at least, stands alongside the - alas, small - group of volumes in this tradition: F. A. Hayek's **The Counter-Revolution of Science**, and Ludwig von Mises' **Theory and History, Epistemological Problems of Economics, and The Ultimate Foundation of Economic Science**. It is indeed refreshing to find Jarvie calling for the injection of "a powerful charge of mentalism ... into the methodology of the social sciences" (3). As he points out, "deterministic" approaches (i.e., behaviourism, functionalism etc.) founder precisely in being unable to satisfactorily explain social **change** - at least, not without resorting to quasi-mystical concepts of inherent "forces", a point Jarvie might also have added. Against the dominant deterministic tradition then, Jarvie champions the views that "ideas affect the way people act, and hence the world is" and that "The struggle of privately held beliefs to realise themselves in the world

through the actions of their believers ... (is) ... a fundamental force behind social change" (4).

Given the scarcity of work in the methodological individualist tradition, and given the basic soundness of Jarvie's own position, it is doubly disappointing that qualitatively his work must be judged as falling far short of that of Hayek and von Mises. The book also suffers from a somewhat disjointed and unintegrated character, a character explained by the fact that it is actually a compilation of previously published essays and additional material (although Hayek, it should be remembered, avoided any disjointedness in his own similarly composed book). The six chapters, largely equal in length, which constitute **Concepts and Society**, vary considerably in value and specific comments on each one are in order.

## **I: Situational Logic**

In the first chapter, "The Logic of the Situation", Jarvie expounds Karl Popper's concept of "situational logic", which is defined as "explanation of human behaviour as attempts to achieve goals or aims with limited means" (5) - an interesting praxeological formulation which was indeed suggested to Popper by his reading in economic theory (6). However, it is to my mind Jarvie's heavy reliance and emphasis on Popper's work, in contrast to his neglect of von Mises (who is mentioned only once and in passing) that explains some of the work's weakness. This is not to say that there is anything **positively** or fundamentally erroneous in this aspect of Popper's approach or terminology or Jarvie's exposition of it, but rather that it is somewhat gratuitous, adding nothing really substantial to what Hayek or von Mises have already written. Jarvie's discussion in this first chapter seems to me needlessly abstract and prolonged, simply elaborating - over-elaborating! - rather than fruitfully applying or validating, the basic category.

This latter point also applies, in my view, to the second chapter, "Understanding and Explaining in the Social Sciences", which is devoted to a discussion and refutation of the relativism of

Professor Peter Winch. While largely valid, Jarvie's discussion seems once more needlessly extended and less than fully successfully integrated with the rest of the book and its thesis.

## II: Concepts and Class

The next two essays, "Between Adult and Child: Notes on the Teenage Problem" and "The Idea of Social Class" are, however, more apposite, being in fact "case studies" chosen to "exemplify the idea that how society is **conceived to be** by its members considerably influences how it is" (7). The former, on the teenage problem, is of less consequence, being mainly some rather "commonsensical" reflections focussing on the teenager's lack of any generally accepted "social role" and on the tensions involved between his economic, emotional, and social circumstances. Of far more importance is the latter essay on social class, which represents a substantial contribution to this major issue. Noting the startling degree of disagreement among scholars as to what social class actually consists of, Jarvie in fact attacks the predominant "naturalistic" definitions. Indeed, what Jarvie argues is that in a free market society (a vital point) "The classification of people into a system of readily and objectively identifiable social groups is false; it does not correspond to the facts about the people it classifies ..." (8).

Unfortunately, some of the major politico-economic premises fundamental to his position are not made fully explicit. But the point is nevertheless clear: "social class" in the present (semi-market) society is different in essence from social class in a non-market or feudal society. In the latter there was, and is, "a fairly clearly (that is, legally) defined system operating in pretty unambiguous ways ... (a) hierarchy of social classes ... characterised by certain non-conflicting indicators" (9). A society in which the market and the cash nexus predominate is, in contrast, one which makes available all goods and services to the great mass of the people and hence destroys social class barriers and immobility. Yet, in our present society the language and belief in "the class system" does still persist. Why? Jarvie answers that "what sustains the



reality of the system of social class is that real people believe in it and act on these beliefs"

(10). In other words:

"[T]hat people have **theories** (i.e., beliefs) of class, and that they act **as if** these theories were true, adequately explains the 'class' phenomena. So I am not denying the reality of those snobberies and discriminatory practices which operate in our society. That people believe in, and act on, their theories of class adequately accounts for these things. One might put the point this way: the concept of social class, like most sociological concepts, is dispositional. It describes people's dispositions to believe in and act in certain typical ways; as a belief held in common and acted upon it is a social myth or tradition; a social class is a quasi-group of people whose links are that they **think** they have similar interest, and who share common **beliefs** about the system of social class, their own position in that system, and similar dispositions as to the behaviour appropriate to their position in that system". (11)

The social class divisions of modern society are thus **conceptual** in nature:

"[P]eople are divided from themselves: their theories or beliefs, their myths, are what so tragically separate them. And these theories, because they are acted on, themselves create and sustain imagined divisions". (12)

Given the continued importance of the collectivist attack on capitalism as a an alleged "class society" Jarvie's methodological individualist thesis is thus of more than mere scholarly interest. It is rendered even more important, in my view, by the unfortunate tendency of some libertarians to reify the market, to see it in a manner independent of the human behaviour and

beliefs of which it is in actuality the result. Hopefully, Jarvie's account of class might also serve as a stimulus to some to consider the whole question of the "social framework of the free market", a question so unfortunately neglected at present (with the notable exception of Wilhelm Roepke) (13).

### III: Against Social Determinism

But if society and social classes are fundamentally conceptual in nature, and given that our concepts can be both mistaken and inappropriate - perhaps disastrous - what can we say about their **sources**? The prevailing and rigid deterministic answers are, as we have already noted with Jarvie, unsatisfactory. Jarvie's final two chapters, "The Sociology of Knowledge Reconsidered" and "Concepts and Society" are thus attempts to reach a new understanding of the "social context", to answer the questions "How does (the) constructed, intersubjective world come to be? How is it sustained?" (14).

In the former essay Jarvie, while rightly rejecting the vulgar, traditional form of the sociology of knowledge as "naive and unconvincing", comments at length on the recent "revised and improved" re-development of it by Berger and Luckman in **The Social Construction of Reality** (1966), a work he describes as "useful and illuminating". In fact, it is by no means inconsistent with methodological individualism to recognise that, as Jarvie puts it, "Once they have existed over time, institutions become something over and above their component individuals: an objective, external, coercive fact. The existence of an institution as such is a primary social control" (15). Jarvie goes to some pains - and rightly so, given the common misunderstandings regarding it - to elucidate the position of methodological individualism **vis a vis** the social context.

"A methodological individualist ... while stressing that society and social entities are made up of individual people, their actions

and relation ships; that only individuals have aims and interests; that individual actions are to explained as attempts to realize aims, given the circumstances; and that the circumstances are changeable as a result of individuals' actions; **need not deny the equal reality of social circumstances ...**

Methodological individualism is not a reductionism that would eliminate all but individuals from sociological explanations". (16)

"Among the cardinal realities facing the individual, then, are his social surroundings, especially institutions. These are as concrete and as real as his physical surroundings, and must play a part in his discussions and activities". (17)

That such a reiteration should prove necessary is indicative of the extent to which methodological individualism has been misunderstood or deliberately distorted in the process of critical attack - and perhaps also of the neglect of its most consistent exponent, Ludwig von Mises. Surely von Mises' own clear and concise formulations should long ago have left no room for misunderstanding? As he wrote in **Human Action**:

"It is uncontested that in the sphere of human action social entities have real existence. Nobody ventures to deny that nations, states, municipalities, parties, religious communities, are real factors determining the course of human events. Methodological individualism, far from contesting the significance of such collective wholes, considers it as one of its main tasks to describe and to analyze their becoming and their disappearing, their changing structures, and their operation. And it chooses the only method fitted to solve this problem satisfactorily." (18)

In fact, a good case can be made that von Mises **over-estimated** the role of the social context and its determining function in human action! (19)

#### **IV: Conditioning or Contexts?**

Unfortunately, however, one is forced to say that Jarvie does **not** in fact satisfactorily answer the questions he himself sets, that he fails to illuminate the relationship between the individual and the social context. Whether one finds Berger and Luckman's study useful (and I do not) it is important to note that these authors are - in the tradition of James Mark Baldwin and George Herbert Meade - committed to a view of individual consciousness as **overwhelmingly** socially conditioned, that "the self is a reflected entity", a passive "social product", or reflective emanation of "significant others". And, indeed, any examination of the **soziale frage** tradition in sociology and social psychology reveals a strong and ingrained normative hostility to self-interest, the profit motive, and the "chaotic" market, and an equally strong commitment to altruism, "social control", planning, and "order" (20). However, while the very real forces of social conditioning, the "manifest effectiveness of social entities", are not denied by Jarvie (nor by praxeologists or libertarians in general), the vital questions of the nature, extent, and **limitations** of that conditioning - of why some men are "common men" and others "innovators" as von Mises once phrased it (21) - remain unanswered, even in outline, by Jarvie. In fact, Jarvie tends merely to talk around, rather than come to grips with, the basic issues. In the final essay he simply returns to a discussion of Popper's view of "the location of social reality in the third world, a world the features of which are constantly changing as they interact with physical states through the mediation of mental states" (22). Yet this concept of the "third world" - at least as expounded by Jarvie - simply **re-states**, in metaphorical terms, the problem at hand! Jarvie ends with the same vision with which he started, but without having either completely validated it, or demonstrated what it adds to our concrete knowledge.

That this is so is all the more regrettable, since in the last two decades or so a small but grow-

ing body of extremely valuable scholarship relevant to his theme has emerged - from writers like Clyde Kluckhohn, Gordon W. Allport, Gardner Murphy, Dorothy Lee, H. G. Barnett, Mary Ellen Goodman, and Abraham Maslow (23). While not denying the constructive and moulding role of society and culture, these writers provide both a far more accurate insight into their operation and of the factors of individual transcendence, autonomy, and resistance to socialisation. An integration and synthesis of this "revisionist" and "humanistic" vein of thought would have served Jarvie well and represented a useful contribution to sociology (24).

I suspect however that American students may well find the brief appendix to Jarvie's work, "The Methodological Individualism Debate", one of its most valuable features - for they may be unaware that such a debate **has** taken place! Although apparently largely ignored in American academic circles, there occurred in Britain during the 1950's a serious discussion of the merits of methodological individualism, primarily stimulated by the work of Hayek and Popper. The debate took place in such journals as the **British Journal of Sociology**, **British Journal of the Philosophy of Science**, **Journal of Philosophy** etc., and involved such scholars as Jarvie himself, Ernest Gellner, J. W. N. Watkins, J. O. Wisdom, Joseph Agassi, L. J. Goldstein and Stephen Lukes. Jarvie summarises chronologically the major contributions and arguments in the debate, and although (as his summary alone reveals) much of the hostile criticism was rendered gratuitous due to its misunderstandings, students of the debate will undoubtedly find many of the contributions greatly stimulating and will be well rewarded by following up the references supplied.

If **Concepts and Society** does not constitute a **classic** contribution to methodological individualism in the manner of Hayek or von Mises it nevertheless does remain an important work - if only because of the paucity of scholarship in this tradition. Those concerned with the methodological foundations of both economics and the social sciences in general will certainly find Professor Jarvie's work stimulating.

## NOTES

1. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1972, in its "International Library of Sociology" Series.
2. The late Ludwig von Mises conceived of economics as being part of a broader science of human action, a science termed "praxeology". See Ludwig von Mises **Human Action: A Treatise on Economics**, William Hodge, London 1949, especially pp. 1-142. On the relationship of Mises' praxeology to earlier economic methodologies see Israel M. Kirzner **The Economic Point of View** (1960), Sheed and Ward, Kansas City, 1976, especially pp. 146-185.
3. **Concepts and Society**, "Preface", p.x.
4. **Ibid.**, pp.x, xi.
5. **Ibid.**, p.5.
6. **Ibid.**, p.9.
7. **Ibid.**, p.69.
8. **Ibid.**, p.97.
9. **Ibid.**, p.122, 121.
10. **Ibid.**, p.119.
11. **Ibid.**, p.120.

12. **Ibid.**, p. 126. Of course, we are not dismissing the very real class, or caste, divisions based upon the relationship of individuals and groups to the State. Such divisions are justly dealt with by libertarian class analysis, with its fundamental categories of the "economic means" and the "political means" to wealth. Cf. Murray N. Rothbard, "The Anatomy of the State", **Rampart Journal** (Rampart College, Larkspur, Colorado), 1(2), Summer 1965, and "Left and Right: The Prospects for Liberty", **Left and Right**, 1(1), Spring 1965, and Albert J. Nock, **Our Enemy, The State**, Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1950.
13. See Roepke, **A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market**, Regnery, Chicago, 1960.
14. **Concepts and Society**, p.131.
15. **Ibid.**, p.140.
16. **Ibid.**, pp.156, 157.
17. **Ibid.**, p.xiii.
18. **Human Action**, Regnery, Chicago, 1966, Third Edition, p.42.
19. Cf. his statement: "Inheritance and environment direct a man's actions. They suggest to him both the ends and the means. He lives not simply as man **in abstractio**; he lives as a son of his family, his race, his people, and his age; as a citizen of his country; as a member of a definite social group ... He does not himself create his

ideas and standards of value; he borrows them from other people. His ideology is what his environment enjoins upon him. Only very few men have the gift of thinking new and original ideas and of changing the traditional body of creeds and doctrines". **Human Action**, p.46.

20. For a particularly graphic modern example see Ernest Becker, **The Structure of Evil: An Essay on the Unification of the Science of Man**, George Braziller, New York, 1963.
21. Von Mises, **Theory and History**, Jonathan Cape, London, 1958, pp.190-191.
22. **Concepts and Society**, p.163.
23. For an introduction to this school of thought, and for further bibliographical details, see Mary Ellen Goodman's valuable study **The Individual and Culture**, The Dorsey Press, Homewood, Illinois, 1967.
24. In this respect Jarvie's definition of the social sciences as "not out to explain why people do things, to understand or explain in that sense. Primarily they are concerned to explain typical, repeatable, and unintended phenomena ..." (*op cit*, p.43) is surely open to debate as excessively restrictive. Is not the whole direction of the book toward the **why** of human behaviour? In fact, the question of the status of psychology in relation to the social sciences is dealt with inadequately in my view both in Jarvie and the other literature of methodological individualism. Jarvie would probably rest his case upon Popper's analysis in "The Autonomy of Sociology", Chapter 14 of **The Open Society and Its Enemies**, Vol. 2, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1945. Popper likewise argues that



"the main task of the social sciences ... is (that) of analysing the unintended repercussions of intentional human actions" (p.95).

However, I consider that Popper not only erects a quite unnecessarily radical dichotomy between what he terms "psychologism" and "institutionalism", but that his whole concept of "Sociology" is unsatisfactory.

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## 8: AN ECONOMIC MISINTERPRETATION OF HISTORY: A CRITIQUE OF J. K. GALBRAITH'S ACCOUNT OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

### Contents:

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Such is the devastating rebuttal by contemporary economists of J. K. Galbraith, that to add to it would almost seem superfluous (1). Even those of his professional peers who share his political orientation maintain a discreet silence regarding the merits or demerits of Galbraith's contribution to economic science.

But, alas, in this age a lack of intellectual clothes does not seem to deter anyone from acclaim or influence, and Galbraith surely constitutes the barest academic "Emperor" of our time. While others expound socialism within economics with at least some semblance of dignity and adherence to the standards of their profession, Galbraith aims at, and influences, the lumpen-intelligentsia, the "new class" purveyors, popularizers and consumers of ideas, and, of course, those sociologists for whom a real social **science**, economics, remains a closed book.

Given the failure of past criticism of Galbraith to have had much impact upon his influence and reputation, it might seem arrogant or quixotic to add to it. But the repeated refutation of error, as tedious and unending as it might often seem, is a scholarly duty, and the only path to the eventual defeat of such error. It becomes a more urgent duty when that error is pregnant with deleterious consequences for the lives and liberties of the great mass of ordinary people.

## **I:           The Age of Uncertainty**

Among Galbraith's works **The Age of Uncertainty** was distinctive in two respects; it appeared both as a book and as a lavishly produced thirteen-part television series; and it aimed to be "a history of economic ideas and their consequences" (2), a mixture of intellectual and economic history. A certain degree of superficiality or simplification might be excused because of its (intended) popular audience, but Professor Galbraith cannot excuse himself from adherence to basic standards of scholarship or honesty. It is thus doubly unfortunate that, in spite of the privileged access he had been granted to the television screens of millions, Professor Galbraith should have shown so little concern with such standards. In spite of his claim to have prepared "careful essays" (3) on the topics of each chapter, **The Age of Uncertainty** constitutes not an honest attempt at popular education but an exercise in crude propaganda. To document this charge I propose to examine in detail one chapter (and corresponding television episode) of the work.

## II: The Myth of Social Darwinism

The second chapter of **The Age of Uncertainty** deals with "The Manners and Morals of High Capitalism". It focuses upon nineteenth century American economic history and on the alleged ideology and behaviour (in both business and social life) of the capitalist "rich". Their ideology, Galbraith claims, was that of "Social Darwinism", a set of beliefs which justified the wealth and position of the upper class by analogies to "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest". The philosophy of Social Darwinism, originated by Herbert Spencer, "fitted", we are told, "the needs of American capitalism, and especially the new capitalist, like the celebrated glove". Spencer's disciples, like William Graham Sumner, were "very numerous" and their outlook constituted "very little less than divine revelation" (4). Visually, we are presented with the figures of Sumner and Spencer enunciating their "stern" doctrine from a pulpit against a quasi-ecclesiastical background - the implication of obscurantism, dogmatism, and reactionary apologetics being quite unmistakable. In the case of the characterization of Sumner, we observe a hesitant speaker, almost guilt-ridden, certainly one ill at ease with his conscience. The audience of stuffed dummies representing the rich clap joyously at Sumner's **apologia** for them - and money flutters from their hands. The message is quite clear, indeed blatant. Sumner, and the other allegedly numerous advocates of such ideas, were nothing more than the mercenary intellectual lackeys of the wealthy business elite.

How true is Galbraith's account of the intellectual hegemony and moral character of Social Darwinism? A curious impression emerges when reading, for example, the classic (and also hostile) study by Professor Richard Hofstadter of **Social Darwinism in American Thought** (5) of the curious paucity of the supposedly numerous American apostles of Herbert Spencer. With the exception of Sumner (and also of the journalist E. L. Youmans, whom Galbraith does not mention) one is really hard pressed to find **any other** figure of significance systematically expounding his philosophy. And among businessmen, with the few exceptions of Rockefeller's - much cited! - "American Beauty Rose" analogy (and some occasional statements by J. J. Hill and Andrew Carnegie) (6), Social Darwinist arguments were largely notable primarily for their

absence. In the words of one historian of ideas, James Allen Rogers:

"[V]ery few businessmen justified their actions by reference to Darwinism. If businessmen bothered to rationalize their life style at all, it was by reference to the tenets of classical economics or Christian morality. Only a few intellectuals and publicists popularised the terminology of Social Darwinism and they were not imitated by the business community." (7)

### III:        **The Motive Behind the Myth**

Why, then, should Galbraith fail to take any note of such modern critical scholarship? A Harvard professor would surely be aware of the most up-to-date scholarship upon the period on which he is writing? Sheer ignorance aside, then, the only answer is that Galbraith is writing as a political propagandist, not as a true scholar. Because he wishes to paint the period of "high capitalism" in the worst possible colours, the supposedly "stern" doctrines of the "survival of the fittest" (we are presented with pictures of snarling tigers) are admirably suited for portrayal as the ruling creed of such a "barbarian, savage world". In the use of this tactic he certainly does not stand alone. The myth of Social Darwinism is one of long standing, originating with the nineteenth century intellectual and political opponents of economic freedom, and adopted by historians (for example, Hofstadter) equally hostile to "capitalism". However, more recent scholarship, by no means concerned with defending either capitalism or Social Darwinism, but simply with the recovery of historical fact, have thoroughly demolished such historiographical mythology. As Robert C. Bannister has written in **The Journal of the History of Ideas**, the image of Social Darwinist apologetics is a "distortion and exaggeration that is perhaps better termed ... a 'man of straw' set up to be knocked down" (8). It was an image "constructed and maintained by collectivist writers to [attack] traditional liberalism by charging that its tenets of individualism, free enterprise, competition and *laissez-faire* were

merely bogus biology" (9).

If Galbraith's assertions regarding the predominance of Social Darwinism are incorrect, equally so is his understanding - or at least, his presentation - of its fundamental character and motivation. The "stern doctrine" of Spencer and Sumner in no way condemned, as Galbraith implies, the masses to a "wholesome poverty". Quite the reverse. For Sumner it was only a **laissez-faire** economy which would ensure a life of prosperity and justice for all (or rather, for all **productive** individuals and groups). It was economic and social freedom which had procured "the vast increase in the production of means of subsistence, won at constantly diminishing outlay of labour and capital ... lower[ing] money prices and [making] money wages worth more, and ... at the same time, lower[ing] the rate of interest on capital and increas[ing] the demand for labour", and thus securing an increasing degree of "substantial comfort" for all (10). And it was precisely the ordinary, hard working common man, the "forgotten man", as Sumner called him, who profited most from economic freedom. For Sumner, only economic freedom could secure a "clean and simple gain for the whole society" (11) and thus it was that "every step which we win in liberty will set the Forgotten Man free from some of his burdens and allow him to use his powers for himself and for the commonwealth" (12). Whether Sumner was right or wrong in his analysis does not alter, however, the humanely motivated character of his thought. That Galbraith undoubtedly does disagree with Sumner's positive analysis does not entitle him to represent it in so shamefully an inaccurate fashion.

#### IV: Social Darwinist Collectivism

Ironically, moreover, it was precisely among the **opponents** capitalism that Social Darwinism constituted a socially vigorous movement. And this is hardly surprising to anyone who dwells seriously on the matter for a moment. Its deterministic and holistic underpinnings were far more akin to movements and philosophies of collectivism. And it was among so-called "Reform Darwinists" and collectivists of various hues - from "conservative" corporatists and

nationalists, to sociological advocates of scientific elitism and statism, socialists, and even some Marxists - that Social Darwinism really flowered, and received its most extensive and detailed developments (13). Contemporary libertarians and classical liberals, it is worth noting, are highly critical of the collectivist premises within Social Darwinism (14). For example, the historian Clarence B. Carson, in his study of the decline of individual liberty and liberal thought, stresses the anti-individualistic, anti-capitalist effect of Social Darwinism, even in the hands of genuine libertarians like Sumner:

"[W]hen the Darwinist outlook was accepted and consistently followed, ideas dependent on the older view [i.e. of Liberalism] - natural rights, immutable, law, human reason, the worth and dignity of man - had to be rejected." (15)

Similarly, the intellectual historian and political philosopher Shirley Letwin has firmly placed Social Darwinism in that "new climate of opinion" of the Victorian period - **collectivism**. And she too has ironically remarked on the way it has been presumed to be, and presented as the sole, or paradigm case, of anti-socialist argument:

"Oddly enough, though it [Social Darwinism] could hardly have been more contrary to what eighteenth century economic theory taught, it came to be considered the model of all arguments against Socialism ... any defence of a competitive economic system was from then on invariably taken to mean advocating a merciless struggle for existence ..." (16)

The practice of selecting **one** particular idea and treating it as the sole existing argument in favour of capitalism, or as its most characteristic expression or, indeed, as the only justification to which it's advocates could have recourse, is an extremely common one (17). That anti-capitalist writers should invariably select what was **not** the sole or even predominant position, but one which was the weakest, most inconsistent, or most open to misinterpretation, does not

perhaps cause one much surprise! Such observations, of course, neither prove or disprove the objective truth of either side's ultimate position. But that socialist scholars consistently resort to such tactics says little for their intellectual integrity, their knowledge, or the cogency of their political ideals.

#### V: **Confusing the Issues: Galbraith's Characterization of Capitalism**

It is worthwhile, however, continuing our examination of William Graham Sumner a little further, for we find the truth not only far-removed from Galbraith's travesty of an account, but extraordinarily illuminating concerning his broader treatment of the period.

Sumner was, in truth, a great scholar, and one of the undoubted founding fathers of American sociology. No mere scribbler in defense of vested interests, he was an indefatigable and active scholar, critical of what he called "**a priori** speculation and arbitrary dogmatism" (18). What one historian has called his "colossal industry" (19) was based on a mastery of thirteen languages. His pioneering research into cultural and comparative anthropology left numerous cabinets of detailed unpublished notes at his death - compiled, it should be observed, without benefit of the lavish foundation grants or financial support enjoyed by modern scholars like Galbraith. The latter's disgraceful implication regarding Sumner ill befits one whose own writing has brought him both diplomatic appointment and the rewards of an enviably affluent life-style.

However, the major point is that Sumner was not at all a lackey of the business elite and the **status quo**. Quite the reverse. He was a vigorous and outspoken critic of the existing order (indeed, his position at Yale was never thoroughly secure), and specifically of precisely those features of his time which Galbraith presents as its essentially "capitalist" characteristics. What, then, could be the meaning of Galbraith's misrepresentations?



## VI: Production Versus Predation

Galbraith argues that, in the world of "old fashioned capitalism", Spencer's "natural selection operated excellently on behalf of scoundrels" (20) and labels the system repeatedly as one of "capitalist predation" (21). In the history of the construction and operation of the railroads we are shown a presumably typical example, which manifest in practice "an interesting choice between two kinds of larceny - robbery of the customers and robbery of the stockholders" (22). What Galbraith in fact does concerning capitalism is confuse the issue by amalgamating two distinct ways of acquiring wealth, what the classical liberal scholars used to call the "economic" and the "political means". The former was honest production and trade in the marketplace; the latter was the use of the state to acquire special privilege and power, to intervene in the marketplace to protect and exercise dishonesty and coercion. Galbraith thus ignores the option of **free market capitalism**. All capitalism, for him, is predation and deceit and no distinction is allowed between the economic and the political means to wealth (23).

Thus it was that Sumner was a vigorous and fearless critic of his time and of so many businessmen precisely because of their use of the political means, their violation of the beneficial rules of **laissez-faire**. A "system of partial interference", he wrote, such as existed in America in his time, "is sure to be a system of favouritism and injustice" (24). A clear and frank analyst of what he called the "class struggles and social war" in both historical and contemporary periods (25) Sumner denounced the "class" activities of businessmen no less than those of 'labour' or any other group (as did most liberals from Adam Smith onwards, a truth socialists normally fail to mention). Like Pareto in his denunciations of "bourgeois socialism", or Bastiat in his analysis of the essence of "communism" (26), Sumner identified and attacked predation and the struggle for privilege in all its manifestations:

"The robbery of a merchant by a robber baron, the robbery of an investor by a railroad wrecker, and the robbery of a capitalist by a collectivist, are all one." (27)

The "selfishness, cupidity and robbery" which indeed existed in his time was not, for Sumner, a characteristic of the system of capitalism he sought, and nor was socialism any solution to predatory activities:

"There is a great deal of clamour about watering stocks and the power of combined capital, which is not very intelligent or well directed.

The evil and abuse which people are grouping after in all these denunciations is jobbery.

By jobbery I mean the consistently apparent effort to win wealth, not by honest and independent production, but by some sort of scheme for extorting other people's product from them. A large part of our legislation consists in making a job for somebody." (28)

Sumner thus carefully distinguished between free market capitalism and the emerging "plutocracy" of his time. A "plutocrat" he defined as:

"[A] man who, having the possession of capital, and having the power of it at his disposal, uses it, not industrially, but politically; instead of employing labourers, he enlists lobbyists. Instead of applying capital to land, he operates upon the market by legislation, by artificial monopoly, by legislative privileges; he creates jobs, and creates and erects combinations, which are half political and half industrial; he practices upon the industrial vices, makes an engine of venality, expends his ingenuity, not on processes of production, but on 'knowledge of men', and on the tactics of the lobby. The modern industrial system gives him a magnificent field, one far more profitable, very often,

than that of legitimate industry." (29)

Such plutocracy, then, Sumner declared to be "the most sordid and debasing form of political energy known to us. In its motive, its processes, its code and its sanctions it is infinitely corrupting to all the institutions which ought to preserve and protect society." (30)

The solution to the power of plutocracy was, however, not simply 'more of the same' - further intervention or socialism - but **laissez-faire**. "Plutocracy", Sumner wrote, "ought to be carefully distinguished from 'the power of capital'. The effect of the uncritical denunciation of capital, and monopoly, and trust ... is ... to help forward plutocracy" (31). For, "[if] plutocracy is an abuse of legislation and of political institutions, how can legislation do away with it? The trouble is that the political institutions are not strong enough to resist plutocracy; how then can they conquer plutocracy?" (32). Sumner's argument has indeed been overwhelmingly confirmed by subsequent events. As the analyses of the political and regulatory processes conducted by Chicago School economists have shown, regulation of the economy has in general been positively sought, and largely controlled, by the very interests which are supposedly to be subject to such regulation (33). And the highly detailed research of numerous historians - New Left, liberal, libertarian or apolitical - has similarly delineated the role of business in seeking a "planned society", and in financing the anti-capitalist opinions and movements which enabled them to achieve such desired intervention (34). The period Galbraith describes as one of "high capitalism" was in reality nothing more than what it remains today - a "mixed economy" in which the productive suffer both the depredations of the "political capitalists" and the meddlings of the coercive state and its apologists, the socialist intelligentsia. Sumner's conclusion, then, in the light of such experience seems even more worthy of consideration:

"[T]he wise policy in regard to it is to minimise to the utmost the relations of the state to industry. As long as there are such relations, every industrial interest is forced more or less to employ plutocratic methods ... **Laissez-faire**, instead of being

what it appears to be in the most of the current discussions, cuts to the very bottom of the morals, the politics, and the political economy of the most important public questions of our time." (35)

## **VII: The Case of the Railroads**

But for Galbraith, **all** capitalist enterprise is inherently predatory. His account is devoid of any evidence of truly critical analysis. The distinction between the economic and the political means to wealth is apparently far too subtle to occur to him. Instead, so obsessed with hatred is he for the businessman that even the slightest pretence at objectivity is disposed of. To observe the repeated presentations of capitalists visibly bloating, swinishly indulging in orgiastic scenes of gastronomic over-indulgence, vulgar ostentation and "conspicuous consumption", is reminiscent of the crudest Soviet propaganda of the thirties rather than appropriate for a supposedly educational television series.

As a concise example (the only one) of capitalist predation Galbraith cites the American railroads, and specifically gives a gloating account of the conflict between the "Erie Gang" (Jay Gould, Daniel Drew, and Jim Fisk) and Commodore Vanderbilt over the possession of the Erie railroad (a "deplorable, and sometimes lethal, streak of rust"). To be presented with the railroads, however, as a supreme example of free enterprise, is to be confronted with a piece of scholarly legerdemain that while common, still begs description. In the words of the liberal historian and writer, Albert Jay Nock:

"Ignorance has no assignable limits; yet when one hears our railway-companies cited as specimens of rugged individualism, one is hard put to it to say whether the speaker's sanity should be questioned, or his integrity. Our transcontinental companies, in particular, are hardly to be called railway companies, since transportation was purely incidental

to their true business, which was that of land-jobbing and subsidy-hunting. (36)

The conflict between the Erie Gang and Vanderbilt was indeed a classic one between a group of predatory plutocrats (the Gang) and a productive businessman (Vanderbilt), the latter forced only to use the state (e.g. bribe judges) in self-defense. Indeed, Vanderbilt suffered repeatedly from the harassment of legislatures and politicians whose interventions were introduced with the specific intention of soliciting bribes. The history of the railroads was an object lesson in conflict between true free enterprise and the interventionist political capitalists. Railroads were the areas most subject to government interference, and hence the areas in which fraud, corruption, and predation were most rife. And it was precisely those who utilized the state for economic ends, the political capitalists or plutocrats, who exemplified the predation which Galbraith ascribes to the "capitalist" and to "capitalism" *per se*. As Ayn Rand has succinctly put it:

"The railroads with the worst histories of scandal, double-dealing, and bankruptcy were the ones that received the greatest amount of help from the government. The railroads that did best and never went through bankruptcy were the ones that had neither received nor asked for government help." (37)

There were, in fact, many productive, honest businessmen even in the railroad business. The lines constructed by Vanderbilt (and his son) for example, were, in the words of a leading economic historian, Louis M. Hacker, "well run; had a splendid roadbed and modern equipment; and were able to survive the depression of 1893-96, paying dividends throughout those difficult times" (38). Not a word about J. J. Hill, whom Hacker terms "the railroad man par excellence" (39) is allowed to enter - and spoil - Galbraith's account of the period. Hill's Great Northern was constructed without government grants or special privilege, was financed soundly and honestly, constructed safely and efficiently, and charged the lowest rates of all the Western railroads. Moreover Hill, recognizing the stake of his system in the prosperity of the

surrounding communities in the whole Northwest, vigorously assisted their general economic development - helping in their construction, guiding agricultural projects and cattle breeding, providing instruction in crop rotation and fertilizer, and opening banks (40). So much for Galbraith's view of the two alternatives open to the railroad men - robbery of the public or of the stockholders! If any other minority group, blacks or Jews for example, were to be characterized on the basis of the behaviour of a few of its members (in fact, in this case of those who should not even be so categorized) Galbraith would probably be among the first to protest. That he should feel so free to condemn a whole "class" in such terms indeed confirms Ayn Rand's description of productive businessmen as "America's persecuted minority".

### **VIII: The Forgotten Men**

Amidst digression into such trivialities as the love-life of Jim Fisk and the menu of a banquet for the dogs of the wealthy, Galbraith deems productive entrepreneurship of no significance. Nowhere do we find any admission on Galbraith's part that this was the great age of industrialization, nor that this process could hardly have taken place had all businessmen been **predatory** plutocrats. That the United States became an industrial nation, absorbed millions of immigrants, and began the task of raising them from the "wholesome poverty" (which Galbraith attempts to identify with capitalism) to the highest standard of living in the world escapes his attention. The words of Louis M. Hacker should suffice to remind us of the achievement:

"The United States of the post-Civil War period, a developing country, was transformed in not more than a single generation into the greatest industrial nation of the world. At the same time, balanced growth took place ... A complete transport net, the beginnings of the generation of electrical power and its transmission, the creation of new industries, the modernizing of farm plant:

all were accomplished in this brief time." (42)

And, as Hacker also points out, this was due to "a free market, private accumulation and investment, and the unhampered activities and leadership of a sizable company of entrepreneurs, or innovators" (43). Not a word do we hear from Galbraith of this achievement and of those entrepreneurs whom another economic historian has called a "Vital Few" (44). "Producing cheap, suppressing competition, and then selling dear" is virtually his sole comment on the American businessman of the period. Not a word of the achievements of Vanderbilt or Carnegie, or of men like Henry C. Frick in iron and steel, Cyrus H. McCormick in agricultural machinery, George Westinghouse, Thomas Edison and Frank J. Sprague in electrical equipment, Philip Armour and Gustavus F. Swift in meat packing or William Clark (of Singer Sewing Machine) in marketing (45).

#### **IX: The Mores of Capitalism: The Industrial Virtues versus Conspicuous Consumption**

Galbraith's failure to display the slightest degree of objectivity or analytical acumen is manifest, moreover, in his lengthy treatment of the manners and mores of the time. Thus he details the "conspicuous consumption" of the "leisure class", its displays of over-indulgence and waste, and its obsession with aping European aristocratic life-styles. That "conspicuous consumption" was hardly restricted to the wealthy of a capitalist period he does at least admit, but shows no awareness of the absurdity of categorizing the "leisure class" of the **old rich** (the established business elite, rentiers or landowners) and their behaviour and value-system with the standards of the dynamic new economy emerging at that time. Galbraith (like Thorstein Veblen before him) describes nothing more than the values of an **old** economic order (that of a landed gentry and a mercantile upper class) and the results of the time-lag before the adoption of the "industrial virtues" (Sumner's term) and developing mores of a productive individualistic mass society. As Joseph Schumpeter wrote in his classic and incisive (but relatively neglec-

ted) exercise in liberal class analysis and sociology: "the social pyramid of the present age has been formed, not by the substance and laws of capitalism alone, but by the laws of two different epochs ..." (46). As in the concrete political phenomenon - specifically, imperialism - with which Schumpeter was concerned, so too in the pattern of social mores. (Ironically, William Graham Sumner was also quite well aware of this stage in the historical development of the "high bourgeoisie" (47). Once more, Galbraith tries to portray as distinctively capitalist a social nexus for which capitalism was in no way responsible, but, on the contrary, was actually undermining.

## **X: Conclusion**

There is, of course, much more one could criticise in **The Age of Uncertainty**. Each chapter could be subject to the sort of critical analysis I have performed here, and with, I would argue, the same effect. Amongst other things one would have to deal with are:

- \* Galbraith's total failure to deal with his books' alleged subject matter, the actual relevance of economic concepts to historical reality, their use in the formation of policy and their effects upon that formation and the passage of events.

- \* The ludicrous imbalance in the attention given to real economists like Adam Smith, and to second-rate hacks like Thorstein Veblen.

- \* The total misunderstanding of Adam Smith's thought manifest in Galbraith's attempt to impugn Smith's principles and motives.

- \* The outrageous attempt to portray the highland clearances and



the Irish potato famine as consequences of **laissez-faire** capitalism rather than state interventionism.

\* The puerile obsession with sexual innuendo and tittle-tattle.

\* The **parti pris** displayed in his constant sniping at the misdeeds of President Nixon and his supporters, while ignoring the amply documented corruption and misdeeds of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and other Democratic politicians (Galbraith is a Democrat and not a Republican).

\* Galbraith's inability to concede the existence of any academic criticism of Keynesian theory and policy.

\* The mixture of falsehood, innuendo and invention with a (very) few basic facts in order to attack the big corporation and the lifestyle of its employees.

\* The ever-present use of stylistic tricks, innuendo, cheap gibes and arrogant condescension in order to influence the reader (and viewer).

Just as the twentieth century will be remembered as a notable period of the debasement of currencies by nation states, so it will equally be remembered as a period of the debasement of academic standards in the cause of political ideologies. Professor Galbraith's work represents a sorry example of the latter phenomenon.

## NOTES

1. Milton Friedman's **From Galbraith to Economic Freedom**, Institute of Economic Affairs, London 1977, contains not only Professor Friedman's own critical comments on Galbraith, but extracts many of the major criticisms by other economists. I added to Friedman's paper a brief bibliography of other works critical of Galbraith and his principal ideas (pp. 63-64). To that bibliography I would now also add: Sir Frank McFadzean, **The Economics of John Kenneth Galbraith: A Study in Fantasy**, Centre for Policy Studies, London, 1977; C. Wilcox, "On the Alleged Ubiquity of Monopoly", **American Economic Review**, Papers and Proceedings, May 1950; I. T. Kaplin, "The Profit Maximization Assumption", **Oxford Economic Papers**, February 1965; "Symposium: Reappraisal of the Doctrine of Consumer Sovereignty", **American Economic Review**, Papers and Proceedings, May 1962; J. Backman, **Advertising and Competition**, New York University Press, 1967.
2. According to the blurb on the front cover of the American, but not the British edition.
3. **The Age of Uncertainty**, British Broadcasting Corporation and Andre Deutsch, London, 1977, p. 9.
4. **Ibid.**, p. 45
5. Richard Hofstadter, **Social Darwinism in American Thought**, Beacon Press, Boston, 1955.
6. See Hofstadter, **Ibid.**, p. 45 *passim*.

7. James Allen Rogers, "Darwinism and Social Darwinism", **Journal of the History of Ideas**, XXXIII(2), April-June, 1972. For other re-examinations of the business ethos, see Irvin G. Wyllie, "Social Darwinism and the Businessman", in Carl N. Degler, ed., **Pivotal Interpretations of American History**, 2 vols, Harper & Row, New York, 1966; Idem, **The Self Made Man: The Myth of Rags to Riches**, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1954; and R. J. Wilson, ed., **Darwinism and the American Intellectual: An Anthology**, Dorsey Press, Homewood, Ill., 1967; 2nd edn 1989.
8. Robert C. Bannister, "'The Survival of the Fittest is our Doctrine': History or Histrionics?", **Journal of The History of Ideas**, XXXI(3), July-Sept., 1970, p. 398. And see also his **Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Thought**, Temple University Press, 1979.
9. **Ibid.**, p.397. See also the comments of another historian of philosophy, John Herman Randell, Jr. In his "The Changing Impact of Darwin on Philosophy", **Journal of the History of Ideas**, XXII(4), October-December, 1961, Randell states: "The truth is that `Social Darwinism', `Darwinian ethics', was never popular or influential", p. 446. On Sumner he remarks: "(he) was a Republican who bitterly attacked any protective tariff, so his influence was very small, except on Yale students", p. 445.
10. William Graham Sumner, "Who Wins by Progress?", in Stow Persons, ed., **Social Darwinism: Selected Essays of William Graham Sumner**, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963.
11. William Graham Sumner, "The Forgotten Man", in **Ibid.**, p. 133.
12. **Ibid.**, p. 135.

13. See Hofstadter, *op. cit.*, and also Shirley Letwin, **The Pursuit of Certainty**, Cambridge University Press, 1965, on Benjamin Kidd and David G. Ritchie, two notable English anti-capitalist Social Darwinists. D. P. Crook has also recently written a study of Kidd: **Benjamin Kidd: Portrait of a Social Darwinist**, Cambridge University Press, 1984. The Italian neo-Liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce, in **Politics and Morals**, Allen and Unwin, London, 1946, pp. 91-92, also sees Social Darwinism as the inspiration for the "left-" and "right-wing" versions of collectivism - communism and nationalism. John Herman Randell also points out the obvious in regard to "survival of the fittest" arguments: "It was just as easy for Lester Frank Ward to take the struggle for survival as between species and thus justify the welfare state as necessary for the survival of mankind. By raising the quality of its inferior members it can enable man to become fitter to survive over other species.", *Ibid*, p. 446.

See also the discussion of the "imperial socialists" in Bernard Semmel's **Imperialism and Social Reform: Social-Imperialist Thought 1885-1914**, Allen and Unwin, London, 1960. Semmel points out that such "premature" Social Darwinists, as Thomas Carlyle, Charles Kingsley and Charles Dickens were as much critics of *laissez-faire* as they were of "inferior" races. The leading Marxist Social Darwinist was Karl Pearson (pp. 35-44) who in turn received the enthusiastic praise of Fabians like Sydney Webb. The Fabian socialists were not only elitist and nationalist in outlook, but strongly influenced by eugenicist and racist ideas (pp. 50-51). In an important piece of textual investigation, Lewis S. Feuer has also shown how Marx, after reading **The Origin of the Species**, declared that it provided him with "a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history". Feuer has demonstrated that "Marx in **Kapital** was indeed writing as a Socialist Darwinist; therefore the first generation of his followers, Kautsky, Bernstein, Karl Pearson, were right in regarding him as such", "The Case of the

'Darwin-Marx' Letter", **Encounter**, LI(4), October 1978, pp. 76, 78. For a definitive discussion of the Marx-Darwin relation see Leslie Page, **Marx and Darwin: The Unveiling of a Myth**, Centre For Liberal Studies, London, 1983.

14. For example, Ayn Rand, **For the New Intellectual**, New American Library, New York, 1961, p. 37.
15. Clarence B. Carson, **The Fateful Turn: From Individual Liberty to Collectivism. 1886-1960**, Foundation For Economic Education, New York, 1963, p. 47.
16. Letwin, **op. cit.**, p. 336.
17. As Professor Tibor Machan has notably and frequently pointed out. For example, "Selfishness and Capitalism", **Inquiry**, 17(3), Autumn 1974, p. 338.
18. "Sociology", in Stow Persons, **op. cit.**, p. 8.
19. Harry W. Odum, **American Sociology: The Study of Sociology in the United States Through 1950**, Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1950.  
In contrast to Galbraith's presentation of Sumner as a guilty and hesitant speaker, it is worthwhile to quote the reminiscences of one of his students, who wrote: "The majority of our teachers were mechanical and dull, routine hearers of recitations. But we came to his [i.e., Sumner's] teaching with eager expectations and were never disappointed. He invited and loved intellectual resistance. Every sentence he spoke was a challenge", William Lyon Phelps, "Introduction" to Sumner's **Folkways**, New American Library, New York, 1960, p. xi. See also Ronald Fletcher's account of Sumner's

scholarship in his **The Making of Sociology: A Study of Sociological Theory, Vol. 1: Beginnings and Foundations**, Michael Joseph, London, 1971. Fletcher describes Sumner as "undoubtedly one of the most important American scholars contributing to the making of Sociology towards the end of the nineteenth century" (p. 502). On **Folkways** Fletcher comments that Sumner "put forward a very clear 'social statics' and 'social dynamics', and brought together an enormous range of comparative and historical data to substantiate the analysis he proposed. **Folkways** is, in fact, a work of massive scholarship, and has been, and is, one of the most seminal books in sociology" (p. 503).

We should also not allow Galbraith's disparaging treatment of Herbert Spencer, another figure of monumental and tireless scholarship, to pass unchallenged. While undoubtedly possessing his fair share of errors and intellectual weaknesses Spencer was a genuine, and humanely motivated seeker after truth. Galbraith's contemptuous dismissal is almost amusing in its chutzpah. Morally and intellectually Galbraith does not inhabit the same universe as Spencer. Even by modern standards Spencer's contribution to knowledge is not negligible. As one historian of philosophy - certainly no disciple of Spencer - has written: "On the whole, when his system is compared with other pretentious philosophical systems of the nineteenth century, it will be found to be more firm and substantial than most. He often went wrong, but this was not due to any want of industry or any deliberate ignoring of the facts on his part. No philosopher of his age was more addicted to facts than Spencer, or so assiduous in their pursuit. This is his great virtue. If Spencer generalized too readily, he at any rate generalized from observable facts, and his errors can be

corrected by the same process of observation and inductive generalization",  
Henry D. Aiken, ed., **The Age of Ideology: The Nineteenth Century  
Philosophers**, New American Library, New York, 1956, p. 169.

Also noteworthy is the recent favourable reconsideration of Spencer's  
work, after decades of neglect, by sociologists. See, for example,  
J. Y. D. Peel, **Herbert Spencer: The Evolution of a Sociologist**,  
Heinemann, London, 1971; and Stanislaw Andreski, ed., **Herbert Spencer:  
Structure, Function and Evolution**, Michael Joseph, London, 1971.  
Professor Ronald Fletcher's "Introduction" to the latter is worthy of  
note in this context. He comments:

"There is [a] fallacy abroad: that only left-wing movements on  
behalf of the masses possess realism and humanity. But it was not  
Marx only who desired a humane society, and there are differing  
approaches to its achievement. Spencer's 'liberalism' is decidedly  
not in fashion, but perhaps it ought to be more so." (p. 3)

20. Galbraith, **op cit.**, p. 49.

21. **Ibid.**, p. 55.

22. **Ibid.**, p. 49.

23. Although later in the book Galbraith emphasises the "anarchic rapacity"  
(p. 249) of "early" capitalism, he makes it quite clear in Chapter 8  
that he does not believe the "morality" of "advanced" capitalism has  
improved. He thus regales us with a listing of some notable English  
and American businessmen guilty of fraud, theft and bribery (of bureaucrats

and politicians). One wonders how any goods ever get to be produced.

24. William Graham Sumner, "State Interference", in *Persons*, **op cit.**, p. 101.
25. William Graham Sumner, "Social War in Democracy", **Ibid.**, p. 60.
26. See S. E. Finer, ed., **Vilfredo Pareto: Selected Sociological Writings**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1976; Frederic Bastiat, **Selected Essays on Political Economy**, Foundation for Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y., 1964.
27. Sumner, "Social War in Democracy", **Ibid.**, p. 120.
28. Sumner, "The Forgotten Man", **Ibid.**, p. 120.
29. Sumner, "Democracy and Plutocracy", **ibid.**, pp. 146-147.
30. Sumner, **Ibid.**, p. 145.
31. Sumner, **Ibid.**, p. 145.
32. Sumner, **Ibid.**, p. 149.
33. See, for example, George J. Stigler, "The Theory of Economic Regulation", **Bell Journal of Economics and Management Science**, 2(1), Spring 1971.
34. Among a large number, see Gabriel Kolko, **The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916**, Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1963; Idem, **Railroads and Regulation, 1877-1916**, W. W. Norton, New York, 1970; James W. Weinstein, **The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal**



**State, 1900-1918**, Beacon Press, Boston, 1968; Murray N. Rothbard and Ronald Radosh, eds., **A New History of Leviathan**, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1972. Antony C. Sutton, **Wall Street and FDR**, Arlington House, New Rochelle, New York, 1975; Idem, **Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution**, Arlington House, New Rochelle, New York, 1974; **Wall Street and the Rise of Hitler**, Seventy Six Press, Seal Beach, California, 1976. And on the body of apolitical and "modern liberal" revisionist work, see my own "Revisionism from the Centre: A Review Essay", **Libertarian Forum**, November 1972 and "The Growth of Revisionism from the Centre: A Review Essay", **Libertarian Forum**, May 1974.

35. Sumner, "The Concentration of Wealth", in Persons, **op cit.**, p. 149.
36. Albert Jay Nock, **Our Enemy, The State**, Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1950, p. 191.
37. Ayn Rand, "Notes on the History of American Free Enterprise", in **Idem**, **Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal**, New American Library, New York, 1963.
38. Louis M. Hacker, **The World of Andrew Carnegie, 1865-1901**, J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1968, pp. 218-219.
39. **Ibid.**, p. 225.
40. See **Ibid.**, pp. 224-226.
41. Rand, "America's Persecuted Minority: Big Business", in **op. cit.**
42. Hacker, **op. cit**, p. xxv.

43. **Ibid.**, p. xxv.
44. Jonathan Hughes, **The Vital Few: American Economic Progress and its Protagonists**, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973. And also see his "Eight Tycoons: The Entrepreneur and American History", in R. M. Robertson and J. L. Pate, eds., **Readings in United States Economic and Business History**, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1966.
45. Hacker. **op. cit.**, p. xxxvi. In fact, Galbraith completely ignores the whole post-war school of revisionist business and entrepreneurial studies, which while by no means engaging in apologetics for businessmen, arrived at a far more objective, knowledgeable and sophisticated assessment of their role in, and contributions to, America's economy and society. Notable contributors to this re-assessment were such eminent scholars as Arthur C. Cole, Thomas C. Cochran, William Miller, Alfred D. Chandler, and, of course, The Research Centre in Entrepreneurial History at (Galbraith's own) Harvard University. See for example, Thomas C. Cochran, "The Legend of the Robber Barons", in R. M. Robertson and J. L. Pate, eds., **op. cit.**
45. Joseph A. Schumpeter, **Imperialism and Social Classes**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1951, p. 122.
47. Thus, in his discussion of the class struggles in modern history, Sumner wrote: "The high **bourgeoisie** develops into a class of wealth and luxury, supplanting, imitating, reproducing with variations, the old baronage; it struggles to form out of itself a patriciate - a body of selected families defined by its own sympathies and voluntary recognition, or a body of loclupetes, or optimates, or a timocracy of those who have enjoyed the honours of the state. The process has been repeated so often in classical states, in the

Italian republics, and in the rich cities of the Middle Ages that it ought to be sufficiently familiar to us". "The Social War in Democracy", in Stow Persons, ed., **op. cit.**, pp. 61-62.

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**9: FREEDOM, RESPONSIBILITY AND JUSTICE:  
THE CRIMINOLOGY OF THE 'NEW RIGHT'**

**Contents**

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**I: Introduction**

The term "New Right" is a label that has, in the last few decades, been applied to intellectual and political movements ranging from racism, fascism, socio-biology, the "moral majority" and Christian fundamentalists and the like to any expression of anti-socialism, and to the revivals of both classical liberalism and traditionalist conservatism.

Indeed, it is hard to see the logic behind the customary categorization of "left" and "right". Why are, for example, are collectivist, anti-individualist and anti-capitalist exponents of racism, anti-semitism, national socialism/fascism lumped together with anti-collectivist, pro-individualist exponents of free markets and individual liberty as being on something called "the

right"? The moral, political and economic premises, and indeed the practices, of fascists and national socialists are virtually identical to those of Marxist and Socialist collectivists (1) This use of the left-right spectrum appears to be a result of, at best, ignorance or confusion, or, at worst, partisan and propagandistic obfuscation.

Unfortunately, the term "New Right" has of late been once more applied to a very real phenomenon, the rise of schools of thought and writers whose common characteristic is a rejection of, or critical stance toward, the dominant world view of socialism/Marxism in myriad forms, of doctrines of social determinism and social engineering, and of state interventionism in personal, political and economic life. Since it is hard to dispose of established usage, no matter how misleading, what is understood by the term "New Right" in this essay is essentially the broad phenomenon of a school, or rather, schools, of thought whose primary analytical, and normative, orientation, is to the concepts of freedom, justice and responsibility.

Within criminology the established paradigm, albeit with some variations, is, to put it crudely, arguably one characterized by an anti-punitive ethics and jurisprudence and a determinist model of the causes of crime and of criminal responsibility. The "New Right" as it is understood herein represents a rejection, albeit not a totally unified one, of this paradigm. It can largely be seen as consisting of four major streams of thought, namely:

- (i) A radical restatement of natural rights classical liberalism, or libertarianism
- (ii) A vigorous application of the conceptual tools of liberal, free market economics
- (iii) An restatement of "traditionalist" conservatism
- (iv) An empiricist, primarily "wertfrei" (value free) critique of the failure of the established policies.

I shall deal with each of these four streams of thought in turn.

## II: The Natural Rights Libertarians

Although frequently called the 'New Right' (2) a more appropriate description of this school of thought would be the "New Liberalism" or, as I have argued elsewhere, the "New Enlightenment" (3). It is a revival of 19th century "classical" liberalism, the revolutionary rationalist radicalism of the major Enlightenment figures (4). Because of a strange linguistic evolution in America, whereby the term "liberal" is applied to doctrines of state interventionism, in contradiction to its historical (and elsewhere, contemporary) usage, most adherents of this approach now favour the term "libertarian".

The major school of libertarian thought is a reassertion of Aristotelian, natural rights/natural law philosophy. On the basis of an analysis of the nature of man as a volitional and rational entity it develops an egoistic/self-actualization moral philosophy of "life, liberty and property". Individual freedom should be limited only by the duty not to initiate force against others (what Herbert Spencer in the 19th century termed the "law of equal freedom"). The primary source of this radical Aristotelianism has been the work of the Russian born philosopher and novelist Ayn Rand, which has been applied and extended by writers like Tibor Machan, Eric Mack, John Hospers, Murray Rothbard, Leonard Peikoff, and David Kelley amongst others (5).

The relevance of this approach to both criminology and legal philosophy is obvious. In the words of Murray Rothbard:

"The key to the theory of liberty is the establishment of the rights of private property, for each individual's justified sphere of free action can only be set forth if his rights of property are analysed and established.

'Crime' can be defined and properly analysed as a violent invasion or aggression against the property of another individual (including his property in his own person). The positive theory of liberty then becomes an analysis

of **what** can be called property rights and therefore **what** can be considered crimes ... Since questions of property and crime are essentially **legal** questions, our theory of liberty necessarily sets forth an ethical theory of what law concretely **should** be" (6)

Thus libertarians reject the whole panoply of "victimless crimes" as not really crimes, and the subsequent criminalization and stigmatization of individuals engaged in acts which in reality range from foolish or self-destructive, perhaps personally immoral, to the completely legitimate and productive.

"In 1977 well over five million Americans were arrested not for attacks upon the other people or property, but for victimless crimes, acts which the government violently (although very selectively) disapproves of, but which do not violate any one's rights; drunkenness, possession of drugs, prostitution, homosexuality, vagrancy, loitering, pornography, and the like ... In order to police the morals of America and 'protect' these men, women and children from themselves, many will be forcibly separated from their homes, families and jobs and thrust into a brutal sub-human prison environment, from which they will emerge as real threats to others, rather than simply the imagined threats that they were to, themselves before incarceration" (7).

Indeed, it is the State itself which is seen as the major perpetrator of criminal acts, by its criminalizing of non-criminal behaviour, and by such coercive acts as conscription, taxation, regulation of the economy, censorship and the like. "The disgraceful reality", writes Jarrett Wollstein, "is that justice in America today is more often than not injustice; that the aggressions committed by police, judges, juries and jailers are vastly greater than all private American violence; and that the American 'justice' system produces more wholesale destruction and carnage than it even remotely begins to prevent" (8).

Some English and American libertarians have attempted to trace in details the historical genesis of "victimless crimes", for example, the criminalization of sexual "immorality" as result of medical paternalism, coercive preventive medicine and various forms of "right wing" and "left wing" Social Darwinism, bureaucratic statism, moral purity movements (in conservative and feminist guises), and paternalist health crusades (9). Libertarians also vehemently reject the assertions of both authoritarian conservatives and socialist feminists that pornography "causes" rape or violent behaviour. Such claims are not only refuted by the existence of free will, but the alleged scientific studies sometimes cited have been shown to be utterly bogus or misleading (10).

The most prolific writer in regard to the stigmatization of the innocent has been the psychologist Thomas Szasz. The core of his critique has been the concept of free will and its negation by concepts of mental illness. In his view, with a very few exceptions of physically caused pathologies, "mental illness" (although he rejects even the term itself) is a largely volitional process over time. Individuals are responsible for their actions, and not determined by inner or outer forces. The consequence of doctrines of mental illness has been "to conceal conflict as illness and to justify coercion as treatment" (11). In both the East and the West unpopular minorities of every sort, whether sexual or political, have been labelled as mentally ill. The language of orthodox psychiatric diagnosis rejected as either meaningless, fallacious and always "used to stigmatize, dehumanize, imprison, and torture those to whom they are applied" (12).

Moreover, the harmful consequences of psychiatric degradation of individualism are twofold. On the one hand it destroys the civil liberties of "offenders", real ones as well as the perpetrators of "victimless crimes". As Szasz concludes:

"The thesis that the criminal is a sick individual in need of treatment ... is false. Indeed, it is hardly more than a refurbishing, with new terms, of the main ideas and techniques of the inquisitorial process" (13).



But the discrediting of the individual as a "self-responsible human being" also exposes society to the depredations of the truly wicked and coercive.

"The American government is now a threat to the freedom of its own people not because it punishes the innocent, nor because its punishments are too harsh, but rather because it does not punish the guilty. One result is an ever increasing army of thieves and thugs, muggers and murderers, abroad in the land, preying on a people unprotected by their own police and judiciary. Another result is an ever-increasing tendency not to punish those who are evil and who commit evil acts but instead to treat them for nonexistent illnesses" (14).

The rejection of the idea of individual responsibility and free will has led to an unwillingness "to shoulder the responsibilities for punishing men, women and children who deprive other individuals of their life, liberty and property (15). Of course, in reality no real "rehabilitation" or "treatment" goes on in prisons, which, in the USA especially, have become nightmare realms of violence and instruction in crime, governed by inmates. Nevertheless, in plea bargaining, absurd rules of evidence and procedure, and lax sentencing and parole, punishment is minimised.

In Szasz's view, then, the remedy for crime is to "re-embrace the ethic of a truly dignified system of criminal sanctions consisting of minimal but fitting punishments meted out as inexorably and as fairly as possible. In proportion as a decent punitive penology would be realized, people would be safe from crime" (16).

The attack on orthodox criminology becomes even more vigorous in the work of Robert James Bidinotto. Demonstrating that a real "crime explosion" **has** occurred, he argues that this is primarily a result of the "excuse-making industry", the social-science establishment as a whole, philosophers, psychologists, political scientists, legal scholars, sociologists, and criminologists

alike. The legal system has increasingly embodied a view that criminals are not to blame for their own actions, that they are determined by environment, poverty, injustice, or by psychological forces beyond personal control, or by alleged socio-biological drives. Punishment, in the orthodox view, is seen as unjust and immoral, deterrence doesn't work, and "rehabilitation", "treatment" or large scale social reform (of a collectivist nature) are the only rational answers to crime. It is this ideology, in Bidinotto's view, that has undermined the legal system:

"The issue of free will versus determinism is **the** key to resolving any argument about the causes and cures of crime ... By not taking into account the free will of the criminal, it's ignoring the very factor which is **decisive** to his criminality: his responsibility for his actions. Instead, it has shaped the institutions of law to excuse him from justice." (17)

Whilst not denying that individuals are influenced by social "forces" and the social environment, nothing can remove freedom of will. "To excuse criminals because of poor social environments leaves unexplained the crimes of those from good social environments. And the sociological excuse is an insult to millions of others from the poor backgrounds, who have **not** turned to crime" (18). Ironically, the culture of excuses, constitutes exactly the sort of environment which encourages crime. Against those who assert "the crime of punishment", Bidinotto sees the victims of crime as the "forgotten people", whose "cries for justice must be heard" (19).

What sort of solutions do the libertarians offer to the problem of crime?

On the one hand, the traditional concept and practice of incarceration is defended. It serves the "goals of retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, and punishment" (20). The removal of the criminal "from free association with a large segment of society", whether in prisons or some sort of geographical "exile", is not seen as either "old-fashioned" or irrelevant. And

even if it served no deterrent function, punishment is seen as a good in itself, an inherent part of justice as retribution (21). Capital punishment is also generally defended on primarily moral grounds, although its clash with the possibility of extracting material restitution to heirs and dependents tends to downgrade it as a mandatory punishment (22).

A more radical aspect of the libertarian approach, however, is its emphasis on the importance of enforcing restitution upon the criminal. With the rise of the nation state and doctrines of statism, (both in the "King's peace" or "debt to society" form) the older, allegedly more "primitive" common law view of crime as an act whereby the criminal incurred a debt to the victim (or his heirs and dependents) was superseded. Libertarians favour the reversal of this development. A central concern of law should, then, be the attempt to ensure the proper restitution by the aggressor to the victim.

It is worth noting that a minor dispute does occur here between pure restitutionists, like Barnett and Hagel (23), and those like Rothbard, J. Roger Lee and others, representing the mainstream of libertarian thought, who see restitution as an essential, but not exhaustive, function of law (24).

Insofar as the state can have any rightful powers (a premise attacked by the anarcho-capitalist wing of libertarianism) they can only be derived from the rights of individuals, and certainly do not deprive them of right to exercise them individually. Libertarians have defended not only the morality but effectiveness and value of private law enforcement, detection agencies and "vigilance societies" (25). The radical anarchist wing of libertarianism argues that ultimately only a fully privatised system of market anarchism can fully preserve freedom and prosperity. The feasibility of such a system is defended and outlined in a growing body of literature (26).

Similarly, the private ownership of firearms is vigorously defended. Contrary to popular belief the evidence demonstrates that ownership of firearms exercises an effective deterrence

against aggression and that "gun control" (in practice, the disarming of the victims but not the aggressors) is both undesirable and ineffective. Women, minorities and "lower class" individuals are especially harmed by gun control measures, it is argued (27). The broader issue of a disarmed citizenry facing ever more mighty state power also lies behind the libertarian defense of the desirability of an "armed citizenry" (28).

Even libertarian exponents of limited (rather than no) state position have sceptical attitude towards the efficacy and honesty of state police forces. Private sector response to rising crime, in form of private security, private patrols, voluntary neighbourhood watches and initiatives like the Guardian Angels have been widely welcomed (29). Groups like the influential Adam Smith Institute in London have thus called for the encouragement, rather than discouragement or persecution, of such private initiatives. Similarly, the privatization of "public" space, housing estates, and streets is favoured in itself and as it lends itself to the extension of effective private security (30).

The more militant forms of socialist criminology, which see "capitalism as the cause of crime", and no fundamental solution outside of a broader radical social transformation, also find their polar opposite in the libertarian position. For the libertarians it is not only the determinist premises that underlay most variants of collectivism and statism that cause crime, but all the ramifications of collectivist economic, social and political policies.

In a historic and comparative account Professor Christie Davies has described the remarkable achievement of what he calls "Respectable Britain" in the 19th century, a close approximation of a crime free society, insofar as that is humanly possible. That condition was attained, in his view, by a "moralizing of society" along very specific lines, the rise to predominance of a morality rooted in individualism and free market values, and in an ethos of personal responsibility and self control.

"The decline of Respectable Britain, the eclipse of the era of the law-abiding

British, can ultimately be traced to the ever-increasing bureaucratic centralization of British society in the twentieth century and the linked, but independent, rise of a corrosive ethic of socialist egalitarianism. Both these changes undermined the moral fabric of Respectable Britain and eroded its central belief in individual personal responsibility" (31).

The rise of crime is seen as essentially the result of what libertarians generally see as the victory of the state in the never-ending conflict between state power and "social power", between imposed "order" and control spontaneous order and social control. In the words of Christie Davies:

"The state has been pitted against society and the liberty of the ordinary citizen constrained by the 'liberation' of violent and anti-social elements ... disciplined freedom has been replaced by anomie liberated delinquency" (32)

The return to a market based order, and the promulgation of a similar morality of autonomy and individualism is the ultimate social route to the minimization, if not total eradication, of crime.

This analysis in fact links up with the broader libertarian analysis of the problem of what has become called the "underclass". This is a restatement of the problem of the phenomenon the 19th century liberals termed "pauperization" (33). The effect of indiscriminate welfare provision on a small but significant group in the "working class", is to elicit a quite rational response from individuals who already share a "high time preference" (ie, unwillingness to defer gratification), and value system best characterized as a "culture of poverty". A moral ethos of irresponsibility, passivity, family breakdown, and crime is nurtured and subsidised. When combined with a reduced risk of arrest and punishment the effects are exactly what we observe in Britain and America, and anywhere else such policies are adopted.

Ironically, it is the "honest poor" and the working classes who are the first and worst victims of pauperization, which, in the words of Charles Murray, represents "an extraordinary range of transfers from the most capable poor to the least capable, from the most law-abiding to the least law abiding, and from the most respectable to the least respectable" (34).

It should be noted that there are some, albeit a minority of, libertarians who take a different view from that outlined above. A notable example is the Australian social psychologist John Ray. Accepting a utilitarian ethic he argues that "the protection of the community be the sole criterion of what is done with any convicted criminal" and that "whenever a criminal is caught, he never be released unless there is good reason to believe that he will in future abstain from crime" (35).

### **III: The Economic Liberals**

At same time as the revival of classical liberal political and moral philosophy was occurring, an even more widespread revival of "classical", free market economics has taken place. The work of the countless adherents of the "Chicago School" of Milton Friedman and his colleagues has established itself as a cutting edge within the discipline of economics. The "Austrian School" of free market economics of Ludwig Von Mises and Friedrich Hayek has had a lesser, but no means insignificant impact (36).

One of the demonstrations of the vigour of this revival has been the phenomenon of "economic imperialism", as it has been jocularly labelled (37). The "Chicago School" has attempted to apply economic analysis to problems and issues customarily conceived as being outside its traditional subject matter and scope. Social and political institutions, politics as a whole, how we treat our bodies, sexual behaviour, love and marriage, and crime and honesty have become part of the "new world of economics".

Not surprisingly, since the characteristics of economic reasoning are its analysis of purposeful individual and institutional behaviour, of rational action related to objectives to be achieved, and the concepts of choice, price, alternatives, and trade-offs, criminality is seen in a very different light from the orthodox criminological view (38). The criminal is seen as no less a rational utility maximiser, responsive to incentives and disincentives, than any other human being.

"Crime, far from being the result of a sickness or mental disorder, in most cases is simply a business oriented economic activity which is undertaken for much the same reasons as other types of economic activity" (39).

By applying economic analysis, it is argued, "the amount of crime actually committed can be determined in the same manner as is the amount of any other activity" (40). Moreover, in it appears "that professional criminals seem to have made sensible career choices. In other words, crime pays" (41).

The economists have devoted considerable efforts to analysing the issue of deterrence. They have examined the existing 'anti-deterrent' sociological research and judged it "very inferior work" (42). More recent research, especially when inspired by economic perspectives, Gordon Tullock argues, arrives at a more favourable view, although its writers have difficulty in getting it "accepted in the more conventional sociological journals" (43). Such findings are, for the economists, hardly surprising (the reverse would be) since "The deterrence theory of punishment is, after all, simply a special version of the general economic principle that raising the price of something will reduce the amount purchased" (44).

Although many of the economists are also favour libertarian policies on moral grounds, their economic analysis alone also lead to the advocacy of the decriminalization of "victimless crime" laws. The "considerations of expediency", as Milton Friedman has put, attest to the counter-productive effect of any act of prohibition, its worsening of the situation for addict and

non-addict alike, and its corrupting effect on all institutions of law enforcement (45). Along with the libertarians the free market economists now constitute the strongest lobby for drug legalization and have produced a large body of literature on the issue (46).

Economic analysis has also produced some unusual perspectives on the nature of crime. On the one hand, Godfather-fed visions of the prevalence of "organized crime" seem to be misled. "Organized crime" appears not extensive, and the market structure of criminal enterprise tends to small and relatively ephemeral enterprises (47). Ironically, this may not be a good thing. From society's point of view "organized", and consequently monopolized crime, would be better than disorganized crime. Monopoly results in the restriction of output. While we do not favour restriction in the supply of goods, we certainly do favour restriction in the supply of "bads" (48).

It should also be noted that application of economics to law has a much wider scope than that of criminology. In such works as the seminal **Economic Analysis of Law**, by Richard A. Posner (49), and in a growing body of literature, legal doctrines and procedural rules can be given explanations, rationalizations and improvement in the light of economic analysis. There are also interesting disputes between what we might term "economic efficiency" theorists (adhering to a utilitarian or pragmatic ethic) and natural rights based analysts (50).

The Economists' arguments have not been without effect upon sociologists. In their work **The Honest Politician's Guide to Crime Control** (51) Norvall Morris and Gordon Hawkins accept a large part of the economic critique, albeit in somewhat less rigorous form. The limitations of mental illness as a legitimate plea, the general efficacy of deterrence, and the disastrous nature of victimless crime laws are all highlighted. It is the latter area, however, in which their advocacy is most spirited and clear:

"The prime function of the criminal law is to protect our persons and property; these purposes are now engulfed in a mass of other distracting, inefficiently



performed, legislative duties. When the criminal law invades the spheres of private morality and social welfare, it exceeds its proper limits at the cost of neglecting its primary tasks. This unwarranted extension is expensive, ineffective, and crimogenic" (52).

#### **IV: The Traditionalist Conservatives**

In Europe Conservatism was ideologically a collectivist movement, sharing with the socialism an opposition to the individualistic, allegedly "atomised" society of capitalism. The radical rationalism and individualism of capitalism was rejected in favour of the "organic society" and the alleged wisdom of tradition. (53). Anglo-American conservatism has been rather a different creature, symbolized by the ambiguities in its founder, Edmund Burke, between his acceptance of Adam Smith's liberal economics and his own endorsement of certain illiberal social values. Anglo-American Conservatism has largely eschewed extreme and mystical forms of anti-rationalism and traditionalism, favouring instead a more defensible view of spontaneous order akin to that held by liberals. While rejecting a consistent libertarianism or individualism, it has, in the face of such enemies as Fascism and Marxism, been increasingly driven to an orientation toward liberty, albeit not without ambiguities.

Not surprisingly there are many similarities between post-War Conservative thought on crime and that of the Libertarians.

Much of the work of the leading Conservative writer on these issues, Ernest van den Haag, has this been characterized by a defence of the efficacy of deterrence and a reaffirmation of the existence of individual free will and responsibility (54).

In line with the greater emphasis on "social order" generally found in conservative rhetoric there tends to be a greater emphasis in conservative writing on the role of punishment as a

broader sanction of social mores, its symbolic effect in establishing "moral solidarity" and stigmatising of criminal behaviour.

"Because most offenders are not significantly different from the rest of the population, society must reinforce resistance to temptation by punishment and by stigmatizing crime as odious, so that most people will not yield to the temptation no society can eliminate" (55).

Capital punishment is vigorously defended. Its abolition, van den Haag argues, is "perceived symbolically as a loss of nerve: social authority no longer willing to pass an irrevocable judgment on anyone. Murder is no longer thought grave enough to take the murderer's life. Respect for life itself is diminished, as the price for taking it is. Life becomes cheaper as we become kinder to those who wantonly take it." (56).

The Conservatives also tend to emphasise the moral crisis involved in the widespread (especially amongst intellectuals generally, and criminologists specifically) manifestation of sympathy for criminals beyond that shown (if at all) for victims. In the words of Walter Berns, "compassion is felt for the criminal and ... anger is directed at society" (57). (Although libertarians have also noted and criticised what it sees as an anti-life transvaluation of values at work in sympathy with criminality). "A just society", the Conservatives very vigorously proclaim, "is one where everyone gets what he deserves, and the wicked deserve to be punished - they deserve 'many sorrows', as the Psalmist says - and the righteous deserve to be joyous" (58).

However, it should not be assumed that the Conservatives are merely embodiments of an excessively punitive tough-mindedness, as some opponents would like to portray them. The determinist and rehabilitationist approach is also seen by the Conservatives, as by the Libertarians, as a real threat to justice and liberty.

For example, writing about the Children and Young Persons Act of 1969 in Britain, which lays out the "treatment" of juvenile delinquency, Colin Brewer makes two points. "Treatment" programmes have been demonstrated to be ineffective. "The old fashioned approach was much more effective than giving the child to the care of social workers, in terms of reducing both truancy and associated crime" (59).

Moreover, the system is horrendously **unjust**. The allegedly humanitarian decriminalisation of juvenile offences, the granting of impunity to crime, has actually provided a total mandate for potentially unlimited intervention into the lives of children and parents. Children can be imprisoned (although it is not called that) as result of non-judicial kangaroo courts, on evidential basis that would not convict an adult. "Compulsory measures of care" as the Act's terminology would have it appear as euphemistic as the "treatment" for political dissidents in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the two juvenile Acts in Britain are, as Patricia Morgan puts it, "examples of the tendencies of rehabilitative systems to destroy legal rights and spawn injustices, while essentially segregating a large measure of society's crime into realms of impunity" (60).

In reality, the extravagant claims regarding rehabilitation and therapy are fanciful. Social work practice is generally characterized by "tolerance of unhelpful behaviour as part of the diagnostic and healing process". The evidence regarding rehabilitative endeavours, it is argued, demonstrates that "none are more effective than traditional penalties in reducing recidivism" (61).

Similarly, regarding adults, the parole system rests upon positivist assumptions, sanctioning an indeterminacy of sentencing which is "predicated upon an acceptance of executive justice that is inconsistent with a concept of open justice" and more consistent with totalitarian states (62).

The key to understanding both the cause and cure of crime lies for the Conservatives in undermining of moral values by the myriad forms of socialism and interventionist statism. In

Patricia Morgan's words, the "quasi-moral distaste for the imposition of norms" (63) characterises theory and practice in much sociology, criminology and jurisprudence, as well as in the welfare and administrative practice of the contemporary state. The result has been a massive failure of civilized socialization, the toleration of a "new barbarism", the endorsement of moral relativism and the unwillingness to publicly affirm real moral values in the face of aggression and insulting behaviour.

In Morgan's view it is especially ironic that many sociologists and criminologists seem to view crime and violence as revolutionary expressions of the "working class". In reality, it is the "working class" which is the most immediate victim of crime. The elements romanticised by some writers are not the real working class, characterized by an ethos of productiveness, but the "underclass" of petty criminals, thugs and parasites on the labour of others.

The answer to this moral crisis can only be, in the words of David Marsland, "at least a degree of re-moralisation of social life" (64). "We have to challenge immoralist permissivism with beliefs and values to which young people can commit themselves positively and actively" (65).

Although there is clearly much common ground between the Libertarians and the Conservatives, there are clearly differences. In van den Haag's work there is a clear willingness to accept the use of law to attain ends other than justice. "Thus", he declares, "justice may be impaired to preserve or enhance another value, or the social order as a whole" (66). Elsewhere he has explicitly rejected the concept of natural rights, has endorsed censorship of pornography, and called for the death penalty for drug pushers. However, in this latter area is it interesting that he has more recently, in company with a growing number of prominent Conservatives, recognized that the "war on drugs" has been lost, and prohibitionist policies proved both futile and disastrous. He has accepted the pragmatic case made by the Libertarians and the Economists (67).

Although libertarians would accept much of the argument made by the conservatives for a "re-

moralization" of society, one suspects that there would be some disputes as to what constitutes morality in certain areas (especially relating to sexual behaviour). Moreover, the libertarians adhere to a stronger belief in the beneficence of spontaneous order. In the absence of the perverse incentives and disincentives established by state interventionism, libertarians would have confidence in the evolution of socially beneficial and harmonious practices. Amongst conservatives, however, there is a tendency toward a more activist support for particular practices. This is manifest in Patricia Morgan's endorsement, for example, of stricter laws concerning divorce (68).

## **V: The New Realists**

While both the libertarians and the conservatives started out from a clear commitment to particular rival values, and the economists did so with a conceptual apparatus already methodologically at variance with determinism, another group of writers arrived at a similar critique of the reigning paradigm from a very different starting point.

In his model of paradigm change Thomas Kuhn argues that at a certain time any established paradigm will begin to confront "anomalies" that cannot be explained in its own terms. What happened in the 1960s in America was precisely the emergence of such anomalies in the Great Society/interventionist/statist model. Quite simply it became obvious that interventionist policies were not working as they were supposed to.

A growing number of scholars and writers who had previously accepted the ruling assumptions became increasingly critical of them. These were individuals whose criticisms of the established paradigm came not from the premises of a rival system but largely or entirely from an empirical and pragmatic observation of the failures of the former. Subsequently, some of these writers have been termed "neo-Conservatives" (some of them accepting the label, some of them not). A better term, in my view, would be "New Realists". Although some have

come to endorse a rival ideology many still share the basic assumptions of interventionist statism. What they reject are the specific policies favoured by orthodox interventionists.

Who are these writers? They include individuals like Martin Anderson, Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, Daniel P. Moynihan, Edward Banfield, Jay Forrester, Theodore Lowi, James Q. Wilson and Jane Jacobs, amongst others. In relation to criminology the most relevant are Jacobs, Banfield and Wilson.

In her work **The Life and Death of Great American Cities** (69), Jacobs demonstrated the counter-productive role of planning and regulation. As well as being economically detrimental such planning had a directly crime-creating result by its destruction of natural social controls exercised in natural neighbourhoods. Similar observations on the criminogenic consequences of high rise municipal housing were made in Britain by Alice Coleman (70)

In **The Unheavenly City** (71), Edward Banfield outlined an analysis of the problems created by the "lower class" value system (ie, a culture of poverty), of the pauperizing effects of welfare, and the rational effects of incentives and disincentives to crime (ie, the reality of deterrence).

By far the most significant writer in relation to criminology, however, was James Q. Wilson. Certainly no libertarian, he explicitly accepted paternalist and welfarist duties by the state, opposes individual ownership of firearms, and still supports the criminalization of drugs to this day. Neither were Conservative values obviously prominent in his work.

Nevertheless, his empirical observations fully support the criticisms offered by both libertarians, economists and conservatives. Poverty does not cause crime, he declared in **Thinking About Crime** (72). Indeed, crime has risen with increasing affluence. Instead, crime is seen as resulting from the breakdown of civic socialization of young people, a "failure of community", and by family disorganization. The "subjective forces - ideas, attitudes, values" (73)

must also be taken into account. The orthodox view of the inefficacy of deterrence is rejected, and is not borne out, in his view, even by the scholarly work of the orthodox themselves (74).

Wilson thus concludes his work:

"Wicked people exist. Nothing avails except to set them apart from innocent people. And many people, neither wicked nor innocent, but watchful, dissembling, and calculating of their opportunities, ponder our reaction to wickedness as a cue to what they might profitably do. We have trifled with the wicked, made sport of the innocent, and encouraged the calculators. Justice suffers, and so do we all" (75).

Although from within psychology and psychotherapy a whole new wave of anti-determinist thinkers has arisen since the war (like Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, and myriad forms of "humanistic", "third force", existentialist, self-actualization and "human potential" schools) very few devoted any attention to criminological issues.

The one major exception to this consists of the work of Samuel Yochelson and Stanton Samenow in their two volume study **The Criminal Personality** (1976/77), and the one volume popularization by Samenow, **Inside the Criminal Mind** (76). Both started as orthodox Freudians, committed to the mental illness theory of criminality and to their work in the "rehabilitation" of prisoners. As a result, however, of their decades of work inside prisons, both became what they termed "reluctant converts" to a philosophy of autonomy and non-determinism.

In Samenow's own words:

"... criminals choose to commit crimes. Crime resides within the person and is 'caused' by the way he thinks, not by his environment. Criminals think

differently from responsible people. From regarding criminals as victims we saw that instead they were victimisers who had freely chosen their way of life ... Criminals cause crime - not bad neighbourhoods, inadequate parents, television, schools, drugs, or unemployment. Crime resides within the minds of human beings and is not caused by social conditions" (77).

Habits are not compulsions, there are no over-powering forces, within or without him, that causes him to act. What causes criminal activity is simply the freely chosen actions of individuals, and the ideas they develop about themselves, others and the world at large. The criminal mind is characterized by ideas which are coercive, self-delusionary, irrational and irresponsible.

## **VI: Conclusion**

Although, as I have demonstrated above, there are differences in analytical emphasis and moral orientation amongst libertarians, economists, conservatives and new realists, I hope I have demonstrated sufficient common ground amongst all three to justify gathering them under one label. Whether their shared critique of the existing paradigm in criminology is found convincing, and whether it will be more fully developed and refined is yet to be seen.

## **NOTES**

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7. Jarrett Wollstein, **The Case Against Victimless Crimes**, Society For Individual Liberty, Silver Springs, Maryland, 1967, p. 4.
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11. Thomas Szasz, **Law, Liberty and Psychiatry**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974, p. xi.
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13. **Ibid**, p. 108.
14. Szasz, "Psychiatric Diversion in the Criminal Justice System: A Critique, in Barnett and Hagel, **op. cit**, p. 119.
15. **Ibid**, p. 120.
16. **Ibid**, p. 120.
17. Bidinotto, **Crimes and Consequences**, Foundation For Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, 1989, pp. 10-11.

18. **Ibid**, p. 6.
19. **Ibid**, p. 1.
20. **Ibid**, p. 28.
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22. See Murray Rothbard, "The Capital Punishment Question", **Libertarian Review**, 7(5), June 1978.
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43. "Does Punishment Deter Crime?", **The Public Interest**, No. 36, Summer, 1974, p. 107.
44. McKenzie and Tullock, **Ibid**, p. 152.
45. See Milton and Rose Friedman, **The Tyranny of the Status Quo**, Secker and Warburg, London, 1984, pp. 136-141; also see Paul B. Horton, "Problems in Understanding Criminal Motives", in Rottenberg, ed., **op cit**, p. 16.
46. See, for example, David Boaz, ed., **The Crisis in Drug Prohibition**, Cato Institute, Washington, D. C., 1990; James Ostrowski, **Thinking About Drug Legalization**, Policy Analysis No. 121, Cato Institute, May 25, 1989; Ronald Hamowy, ed., **Dealing With Drugs: Consequences of Government Control**, Pacific Research Institute For Public Policy/Lexington Books, D. C. Heath, Lexington, Mass., 1987.
47. See Peter Reuter, **The Organization of Illegal Markets: An Economic Analysis**, US Department of Justice/National Institute of Justice, 1968, reprinted by Loompanics Unlimited, Port Townsend, Washington, nd; Idem, **Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Visible Hand**, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1983.
48. See James Buchanan, "A Defense of Organized Crime?", in Rottenberg, ed., **Op Cit**.

49. Little Brown, Boston, 1986; and see also Idem, **The Economics of Justice**, Harvard University Press, 1987
50. See Richard A. Epstein, **A Theory of Strict Liability: Toward a Reformulation of Tort Law**, Cato Institute, Washington, D. C., 1980, and the "Foreword" by Marrio Rizzo.
51. Chicago University Press, 1976.
52. **Ibid**, p. 2.
53. See Robert A. Nisbet, "De Bonald and the Concept of the Social Group", **The Journal of the History of Ideas**, V(3), June 1944; Idem, "Conservatism and Sociology", **American Journal of Sociology**, LVIII(2), September 1952.
54. See **Punishing Criminals: Concerning a Very Old and Painful Question**, Basic Books, New York, 1975; Idem, **Deterring Potential Criminals**, Social Affairs Unit, London, 1985.
55. Van den Haag, **Punishing Criminals**, op. cit, pp. 62, 82. Although this aspect is not ignored by libertarians; see, for example, Williams, "The Arrest and Punishment of Criminals", **op. cit.**
56. **Punishing Criminals**, op. cit., p. 213.
57. Berns, **For Capital Punishment: Crime and the Morality of the Death Penalty**, Basic Books, New York, 1979, p. 81.
58. Berns, **Ibid**, p. 147.

59. Brewer, "Compulsory Therapy For Crime: Bad Habits Are Not Diseases", in Brewer et al, **Criminal Welfare on Trial**, Social Affairs Unit, London, 1981, p. 16.
60. Morgan, "The Children's Act: Sacrificing Justice to Social Workers' Needs?", in Brewer et al, **Ibid**, p. 65.
61. Morgan, **Ibid**, pp. 60, 58.
62. Terence Morris, "The Parole System: Executive 'Justice'", in **Ibid**, p. 37.
63. Morgan, **Delinquent Fantasies**, Maurice Temple Smith, London, 1978, p. 136
64. Marsland, "Young People Betrayed", in Digby Anderson, ed., **Full Circle: Bringing Up Children in the Post-Permissive Society**, Social Affairs Unit, London, 1988, p. 70.
65. **Ibid**, p. 71; and see also, Idem, **Understanding Youth**, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1991, forthcoming.
66. **Punishing Criminals, op. cit.**, p. 36.
67. See for example, America's leading traditionalist Conservative, William F. Buckley, in "Legalize Drugs and Reduce Crime", reprinted in **Southern Libertarian Messenger**, October, 1986.
68. Morgan, "For the Sake of the Children?", in Anderson, ed., **Full Circle, op. cit.**
69. Jane Jacobs, **The Life and Death of Great American Cities**, Penguin Books,



Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1964.

70. Alice Coleman, **Utopia on Trial: Vision and Reality in Planned Housing**, Hilary Shipman, London, 1985; Idem, **Altered Estates**, Adam Smith Institute, London, 1988.
71. Little, Brown, Boston, 1968; 2nd edn. 1974.
72. Vintage Books, New York, 1977 (1975).
73. **Ibid**, p. 233
74. **Ibid**, pp. 47-70.
75. **Ibid**, pp. 235-6.
76. Times Books, New York, 1984.
77. **Inside The Criminal Mind**, **Ibid**, pp. xiv, 6.

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**Textual Note:** In the published version my footnotes were bracketed in the text and listed as References. I have restored them to their original form as footnotes.

## 10: THE MORAL CASE FOR PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

"The New Intellectuals must fight for capitalism, not as a 'practical' issue, not as an economic issue, but, with the most righteous pride, as a **moral** issue. That is what capitalism deserves, and nothing less will save it."

Ayn Rand, **For the New Intellectual**.

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### Contents:

- I: The Socialist Moral Tradition
  - II: The Moral Abdication of the Liberal Tradition
  - III: The Virtue of Selfishness: The Moral Case for Private Enterprise
- Notes

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To examine the nature of the socialist tradition and the socialist case against private enterprise and the free market is a daunting task. Under its common banner we find many and diverse themes and motivations. And yet, amidst the diversity we can distinguish one common, and, I would argue, predominant theme - that of the **moral** evil of private ownership, the profit motive, and "selfish" private enterprise.

We thus find that socialists and Marxists are rarely content to rest their case against capitalism on a simple "exploitation" argument: that the individual is being robbed of his rightful proper-

ty, and that the masses are unjustly being prevented from obtaining the good things in life. This approach would be - is - an **individualistic** moral position. Its premises are that the individual is the rightful owner of his self and his property, should profit from it (be the rightful beneficiary of his own actions), and is rightfully concerned with obtaining material goods and the pleasures of the world (1). However, what we find in countless thinkers and writers is a moral attack on private enterprise as constituting individualism and selfishness. The individual, it is held, should serve others, "society" or some greater collective good rather than be concerned with his own interest.

### **I: The Socialist Moral Tradition**

We can trace this socialist moral tradition through virtually the whole range of socialist thinkers (and so-called precursors of socialism) (2). It runs clearly through the earliest of "utopian" socialists like Mably and Morelly, Babeuf and Buonarotti, through Fourier to the more "modern" and allegedly "scientific" pre-Marxians like the Saint-Simonians and Auguste Comte. It was the latter, of course, who actually coined the term "altruism" to denote the placing of others and their interests before self, and who sought the "scientific" and total subjugation of the individual to the collective. The tradition continued through the collectivist nationalists like Mazzini, who were equally vehement in their denunciation of the "fatal crime of egotism". And in the German philosopher Fichte the hatred of "selfishness" becomes, as J. L. Talmon points out, a "yearning for self-surrender" and "the utter annihilation of the individual" (3).

The relatively recent scholarly concentration on Marx's early writings, particularly the Paris Manuscripts and the **Grundrisse**, clearly demonstrates, however, the ethical motivation and normative content which later tended to be obscured by the structure of so-called "scientific socialism" and historical materialism (4). In the early Marx we are almost swamped by the incessant denunciation of the "egoism of trade", of man as "private individual" and "fractional

being" in "civil society". Thus Marx rejected contemptuously the "rights of man" as (quite correctly, of course), the rights of "egoistic man". In his notorious essay "On the Jewish Question" the "**anti-social** element" of Judaism - "**practical need, self-interest**" was taken as symbolic of capitalism in general. This anti-social selfishness, in Marx's view, thus "sever(s) all man's species-ties, substitute(s) egoism and selfish need for those ties, and dissolve(s) the human world into a world of atomistic, mutually hostile individuals" (5). The ideal for Marx was man as "species being", in a state of collectivist, non-egoistic consciousness in which even his senses would be "emancipated" and "truly human" and when "need or satisfaction have ... lost their **egoistic nature**" (6).

The same anti-egoism was as vehement in German National Socialism (Nazism), the manifesto of the National Socialist Workers Party of Germany proclaiming that "The activities of the individual may not clash with the interests of the whole, but must proceed within the frame of the community and be for the general good ... **THE COMMON INTEREST BEFORE SELF**" (7). Hitler himself was, in **Mein Kampf**, as vigorous as Marx in his denunciation of "greed and materialism", and called for "not material selfishness, but readiness for sacrifice and joy in renunciation" (8). Likewise, Italian Fascism, as enunciated by Benito Mussolini, was fundamentally concerned with "suppressing the instinct for a life enclosed within the brief round of pleasure in order to restore within duty a higher life free from the limits of time and space: a life in which the individual, through the denial of himself, through the sacrifice of his own private interests, through death itself, realises that completely spiritual existence in which his value as a man lies" (9).

In Britain, our own distinctively less dramatic and more boring varieties of socialism manifest such as Fabianism were equally hostile to "selfishness" and materialism. For Sydney Webb "the perfect and fitting development of each individual is not necessarily the utmost and highest cultivation of his own personality, but the filling, in the best possible way, of his humble function in the great social machine" (10). Indeed, in Beatrice Webb that hostility to individualism and egoism reaches a pathological extreme, calling for "the sacrifice of individual life and

happiness ... the greatest of human characteristics, the power of self-sacrifice in the individual for the good of the community" (11). Fascinated by the Buddhist state of Nirvanic self-obliviation she declared that "to me, human personality as I know it - myself and others - is a tragedy ... I long to rid myself of my personality (12).

At the present time the socialist moral consensus is virtually unchallenged. The works of the late Richard Titmuss, with their tediously expounded message of the "supreme ethic of service rather than the mundane aim of profit" (13) provide the substance of countless University degrees in social policy and administration. And the constant refrain of the Labour "Left" is against the "selfish, avaricious, materialistic philosophy of capitalism which says every man for himself" (as Joan Maynard MP put it) (14).

## **II: The Moral Abdication of the Liberal Tradition**

Tragically, however, the liberal defenders of private enterprise and capitalism have almost universally abdicated from the tasks of replying to the socialist moral critique. Their arguments have largely centred on the **economic** superiority of capitalism - its ability to "deliver the goods" - while, at best, ignoring moral issues, or, at worst, even conceding the socialists' premises.

Even Adam Smith, the very founder of both free market economics and the modern liberal political tradition, could declare, in **The Theory of Moral Sentiments**, that "man was made to promote ... the happiness of all" (15). As one Smith scholar has observed:

"It was not to serve the selfish benefit of the individual that he should be given his head ... the belief that Smith was primarily an individualist ... is the very reverse of the truth. For him ... the interests of society were the end. (16)

And thus, even at the height of their intellectual predominance, liberals failed to challenge the moral case of their rising socialist opponents. In that bastion of militant liberalism, the **Cobden Club Essays**, we find Joseph Gostick attempting to reply to socialism in the following manner:

"The error of communistic theories is that they seek to gain, by a change of formal institutions, results that, if ever attainable, can be reached only by a long and severe education of human nature. When these results are obtained, when the three higher principles - sympathy, benevolence and self-sacrifice - have gained a sure and final predominance over the four lower - egotism, acquisition, emulation, and legal strife - **then** communistic theories, requiring the industrious to work for the idle, and the able to sacrifice themselves for the incapable may be found possible, but at that time we shall want neither these nor any other theories, we shall be simply translated into Paradise." (17)

An impractical, but nevertheless noble ideal! Such was the general liberal view of socialism. William Lecky lauded the "nobler motives", the "conception of the purely disinterested ... the noblest thing we possess, the celestial spark that is within us". The "moral elevation of an age" he judged by the intensity of the spirit of self sacrifice. And the "love of wealth", although admittedly "beneficial in its consequences", is "far less noble" and "contract(s) and indurate(s) the character" (18). Similarly, Henry Sidgwick the liberal economist and political philosopher, contrasted unfavourably the so-called "selfish struggle of individuals" with the "mutual service and general diffusion of public spirit" (19). Although "admittedly advantageous to production" it was quite clear that Sidgwick abhorred what he saw as "the anti-social temper and attitude of mind, produced by the continual struggle of competition". This "moral aversion to private enterprise", Sidgwick admitted, was an important motivation "in the impulses that lead thoughtful persons to embrace some form of socialism". Even for those - like himself - who were not socialists, Sidgwick continued, and who "(regard) the stimulus and

direction of energy given by the existing individualistic system as quite indispensable to human society as yet present constituted, yet feel the moral need of some means of developing in the members of a modern industrial community a fuller consciousness of their industrial work as a social function, only rightly performed when done with a cordial regard to the welfare of the whole society ..." (20).

It would not be going too far to say that liberalism as an ideology committed suicide. Who after all - and especially among young people - will crusade for a movement and a way of life which declares itself morally flawed, practical but basically immoral?

And yet the few contemporary alleged defenders of private enterprise and capitalism are still plowing the same barren furrow. Peregrine Worsthorne actually **praises** capitalism for being "such a uniquely modest economic system in terms of moral pretensions" and claims that "the capitalist system is a non-moral or amoral way of organising and distributing wealth" (21). Edward Norman, who, marginally more ambitious, declares that "the morality of capitalism is about the morality of choice" does not get to grips with the fundamental issues. And, similarly, he labels the moral outlook of capitalism as, contrary to "Humanism", an unoptimistic one which regards men as "inherently defective"! (22). Even amidst the ranks of today's most gifted liberal scholars we find little more than demolition of the **economic** idiocies of socialism (23) or, in Hayek's essay "The Moral Element in Free Enterprise" (24), a discussion of generally secondary matters.

Yeats' lines sum up, probably better than any others the bleak situation resulting from liberalism's failure - one where

"The best lack all conviction while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity."

### III: The Virtue of Selfishness: The Moral Case for Private Enterprise

As paradoxical as it might seem then, the American liberal Rose Wilder Lane was fundamentally correct when she declared that the classical liberals "[have] not grasped [the] basic individual principle at all ... [their] basic **assumption** is communist." (25)

But if the liberals abdicated from the task of a vigorous moral defence of capitalism we can at least thank our enemies for their frank and correct identification of the central issues. For it is precisely the **selfishness** of private enterprise that constitutes its moral virtue, its moral **glory**. Put aside for the moment the immense moral stigma - and intimidation - so successfully injected into the term selfishness by generations of collectivist propagandists, and consider the **real** meaning of the moral dichotomy between socialism and capitalism.

Capitalism holds that the individual possesses the right to exist for his own sake, the right to life, liberty and property. Socialism quite clearly does not, but rather holds the view that individuals are duty bound to sacrifice their life, liberty and property for the good of some collective, whether "the people", "the nation", "the race", "the fatherland" or whatever, depending upon the particular brand of socialism. Marx was quite right, then, in declaring the capitalist liberal concept of individual rights as "egoistic rights". Either the individual exists as an entity of value, for his own sake, as an end in himself and not a means to the end of others, or he exists as a creature bound to work for the sake of others. There is a word for those commanded to exist and labour for the sake of others - **slaves**. The morality of socialism is the morality of slavery.

The barbarities of the countless "noble" and "unmundane" socialist experiments, the atrocities of Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, or the Cambodian communists, are not, then, simply historical **accidents**; they are the logical, **inevitable** products of altruist morality, the creed of "unselfishness". As the American philosopher Ayn Rand has put it:



"If service and self-sacrifice are a moral ideal, and if the 'selfishness' of human nature prevents men from leaping into sacrificial furnaces, there is no reason ... why a dictator should not push them in at the point of bayonets - for their own good, or the good of humanity, or the good of posterity, or the good of the latest bureaucrat's latest five year plan. There is no reason that (socialists) can name to oppose **any** atrocity. The value of a man's life? His right to exist? His right to pursue his own happiness? These are concepts that belong to individualism and capitalism - to the antithesis of altruist morality." (26)

Of course, socialists will try to drag the inevitable **red** herrings across the path of this argument. The immediate image they manage to link to the term selfishness is one of brutal rapacity, dishonesty, lack of concern for the rights of others, etc. In fact, since the term means literally concern for one's self-interest, their reaction is really a rather telling confession of **their** view of what is in their interest, and of their inability to conceive of a society in which non-sacrificial, non-violent, non-compulsory co-operation and co-existence is possible between individuals - where individuals are not forced to be either hammers or anvils, victims or executioners. It is not, of course, in the individual's interest, either physically or psychologically, to live in such an unhuman (and inhumane) manner. The glory of capitalism is that it is precisely the system - as economic analysis and historical experience have repeatedly demonstrated - in which **all** individuals profit and prosper by "serving" each other in the market, where their selfish seeking of profit guides them, as if by an "invisible hand" as Adam Smith so notably put it, to provide each other with goods and services.

The other red herring inevitably to be met is, of course, of the "Wouldn't you help an abandoned baby found in the streets?" sort. It is an argument which equates **any** benevolence, good will or assistance to others with self-sacrifice and altruism. In fact, helping others rests precisely upon the individualist, **selfish** premise, that human beings are values and ends in themselves. It is altruism which in fact devalues lives and holds them as objects of sacrifice

for others or some alleged **greater good**.

It is a monument to the immense and unchallenged authority built up by the altruist morality that hardly anyone penetrates the almost idiotic mystifications, false consciousness, and illogicalities inherent in it. For example, if it is good to work for the sake of others, and not for personal private profit, one is actually left in a sort of circular position where 'A' works for 'B' who works for 'C' and so on **ad infinitum**. But why should 'B' enjoy the good provided by 'A' when he is forbidden to enjoy the same good if he provides it for himself (but in turn has to provide it for 'C')? In fact, it seems clear from their words that many socialists seem to find material goods wicked in themselves. Their "morality" is one of austerity, asceticism, renunciation and poverty. It provides a fitting ideology for the reality of life under socialist planning and all forms of actually-existing socialism.

Moreover, the socialist morality of altruism provides a tremendously useful ideological disguise for all forms of tyranny. For if sacrifice is to be its watchword and policy, then there has to be someone be either **dictating** or at least **collecting** the sacrifice. And since "society", "the public interest", "the state", etc. do not exist as concrete entities, it will be their self-appointed spokesmen who will be receiving the benefits.

It is impossible, of course, in this brief essay to outline fully the philosophy of "ethical egoism" and its epistemological roots and validation, which underlies the private enterprise system. Fortunately there is now a growing number of intellectuals and academics who, following the seminal work of the American philosopher and novelist Ayn Rand, have recognised the moral code implicit in capitalism and are systematically expounding and elaborating it (27). For the first time in centuries the "virtue of selfishness" and "capitalism the unknown ideal" are being recognised and a **moral** battle is being fought for them.

With its banner at last unfurled with moral pride and idealism, capitalism is now attracting the commitment and support of young people who recognise the wisdom of Ayn Rand's words:

"The world crisis of today is a **moral** crisis - and nothing less than a moral revolution can resolve it ... let those who care about the future, those willing to crusade for a perfect society, realise that the new **radicals** are the fighters for capitalism .... to win requires your total dedication and a total break with the world of your past, with the doctrine that man is a sacrificial animal who exists for the pleasure of others. Fight for the value of your person ... fight with the radiant certainty and absolute rectitude of knowing that yours is the Morality of Life and that yours is the battle for any achievement, any value, any grandeur, any goodness, and any joy that has ever existed on this earth." (28)

### NOTES

1. This is particularly apparent in the English pre-Marxian exponent of exploitation theory, Thomas Hodgskin. See Alexander Gray's account in **The Socialist Tradition**, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1947, pp. 277-288. Gray, largely a critic of socialism, ironically finds Hodgskin's position tending to "a somewhat revolting individualism"! (p.282).
2. Of course, there are exceptions to this generally anti-egoist, anti-individualist stream of socialism. See, for example, Aaron Notland, "Individualism in Jean Jaures' Socialist Thought", **Journal of the History of Ideas**, XXII(1), January-March 1961. Oscar Wilde's essay, "The Soul of Man under Socialism", in **Intentions and Other Writings**, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, n.d., also defends socialism in egoistic terms, as a means of sustaining a "new individualism". The British Bakunite-Marxist Guy Aldred similarly did not attack self interest, but proclaimed "selfishness ... at the root of all social and industrial development", **Studies in Communism**, The Strickland Press, Glasgow, 1940, p.9. He sought a "sound and sane collectivism" for the sake and in terms of a "practical individualism" See my own essay,

"Guy Aldred", **The Match!**, 6(1), January 1975, reprinted as **Guy Aldred (1886-1963): The Socialist As Libertarian**, Libertarian Heritage No. 12, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1994, for a further treatment. There were also some "Nietzschean" Marxists among the Russian Bolsheviks, of whom Stanislav Volski would appear to be the most genuine individualist. See George L. Kline, "'Nietzschean Marxists' in Russia", in F. J. Adelman, ed., **Demythologising Marxism**, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, 1969. Such cases of individualist oriented socialists should not be confused, however, with various "dialectical" exponents of "new" and "higher" alleged individualisms, who seek to blot out real distinctions in conceptual fuzziness. For example, Steven Lukes, **Individualism**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1978, and Ellen M. Wood, **The Mind and Politics: An Approach to the Meaning of Liberal and Socialist Individualism**, University of California Press, 1972.

3. Alexander Gray, *op cit*; Emile Durkheim, **Socialism and Saint Simon**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959; J. L. Talmon, **Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase**, Secker and Warburg, 1960, p. 195.
4. See especially Eugene Kamenka, **The Ethical Foundations of Marxism**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1962 and **Marxism and Ethics**, Macmillan, London, 1969. As Kamenka points out in the latter work: "As Marx the philosopher became somewhat submerged beneath Marx the social scientist (the) ethical impulse was to some extent hidden from view by accretions from other sources - by the materialist critique of moralities, by Darwinian strains, by a concentration on material needs that bore a superficial resemblance to utilitarianism", p 3.
5. "On the Jewish Question", in L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat eds., **Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society**, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1967, pp. 237, 240, 243, 247.

6. Marx, "Private Property and Communism", *Ibid*, p. 308.
7. Quoted in Eugene Weber, **Varieties of Fascism: Doctrines of Revolution in the Twentieth Century**, D. Van Nostrand, New York, 1964, p. 154.
8. Adolf Hitler, **My Struggle**, Hurst and Blackett, London, 1937, pp. 118, 167.
9. Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism", in Michael Oakeshott, **The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe**, Basic Books, London, 1940, p. 164.
10. Alexander Gray, **The Socialist Tradition**, *op. cit.*, p. 379.
11. Quoted in Shirley Letwin, **The Pursuit of Certainty**, Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 360, 351.
12. *Ibid*, p. 350.
13. D. A. Reisman, **Richard Titmuss: Welfare and Society**, Heinemann Educational Books, London, 1977, p. 124.
14. **The Star**, November 26, 1975.
15. Quoted in Thomas D. Campbell, **Adam Smith's Science of Morals**, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1971, p. 219.
16. A. L. Macfie, **The Individual in Society: Papers on Adam Smith**, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1967, p. 54.

17. Joseph Gostick, "Trade Unions, and the Relations of Capital and Labour", in Emile de Laveleye et al., **Cobden Club Essays**, 2nd Series, 1871-2, Cassell, Peter and Galpin, London, 1872, pp. 391-392.
18. William Lecky, **History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe** (1865), Watts, London, 1910, Vol. 2, pp. 135, 81, 115.
19. Henry Sidgwick, **The Elements of Politics**, 3rd. edn., Macmillan, London, 1908, p. 158.
20. **Ibid**, p. 589. Another illuminating example of the liberal acquiescence before the moral attack was in one writer's attempted reply to George Bernard Shaw in the 1920's:

"Now it is true", wrote Lillian Le Mesurier, "and may be gladly acknowledged that there are people, saints and heroes whose stimulus and strong motive is not one of personal advantage but a spiritual motive: it is the service of God and their neighbour. Let us be thankful for them: it is they who lead the race up towards the stars ... We know with shame that we cannot walk with them upon the heights and breathe the rare air which they breathe, being as yet on a lower and more material plane ... To work for the sake of profit is not so noble an aim as to work for the sake of service: it is not the highest principle, but - it answers! It is as vain to try and run industry on principles which are far ahead of the common spiritual level ... Yet Socialists persist in talking as if human nature were entirely different to what it manifestly is."

Lillian Le Mesurier, **The Socialist Woman's Guide to Intelligence: A Reply to Mr. Shaw**, Ernest Benn, London, 1929, pp. 69-70.

21. Peregrine Worsthorne, "Religion and the Fall of Capitalism", **The Sunday Telegraph**, 2 November, 1975.
  
22. "Capitalism as a Moral Defence Against the State", **The Daily Telegraph**, 21 March, 1978
  
23. For example, Yale Brozen, "A Corporate Rebuttal to: `Profit is Inherently Unethical'", in Idem et al, **Corporate Responsibility: The Viability of Capitalism in an Era of Militant Demands**, Rockford College Institute, Rockford, Illinois, 1978.
  
24. In Friedrich Hayek, **Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics**, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1969. H. B. Acton's **The Morals of Markets: An Ethical Exploration**, Longmans, London, 1971, also largely misses the central ethical issues.
  
25. Rose Wilder Lane, **The Lady and the Tycoon: Letters of Rose Wilder Lane and Jasper Crane** (MacBride, Roger Lea, ed.), Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho, 1973, p. 103.
  
26. Ayn Rand, **Faith and Force: The Destroyers of the Modern World**, The Objectivist, New York, 1960, p. 11.
  
27. See particularly, Ayn Rand, **For the New Intellectual**, New American Library, New York, 1961; Idem, **The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism**, New American Library, New York, 1967. Rand's two major novels, **The Fountainhead**, Panther Books, London 1961, and **Atlas Shrugged**, New American Library, New York, 1957, are magnificent portrayals of her philosophy. Professor John Hospers deals with her approach in his best-selling texts, **An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, rev.

edn., 1967, and **Readings in Introductory Philosophical Analysis**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1969. Tibor Machan's **Human Rights and Human Liberties**, Nelson Hall, Chicago, 1975, also provides a clear statement. An excellent critical overview and discussion of her work can be found in Douglas J. Den Uyl and Douglas B. Rasmussen, eds., **The Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand**, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, 1984. Barbara Branden's **The Passion of Ayn Rand**, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1986, is a fascinating biography. Dr. Nathaniel Branden has explored the psychological aspects and importance of ethical egoism in a number of works, including: **The Psychology of Self-Esteem**, Bantam Books, New York, 1971; **Breaking Free**, Bantam Books, New York, 1972; "Psychotherapy and the Objectivist Ethics", in B. A. Ard, Jr., ed., **Counselling and Psychotherapy: Classics in Theories and Issues**, Science and Behaviour Books, Palo Alto, California, 1966. It should also be pointed out that this ethical egoist position is very much a more systematic extension of the now almost totally neglected Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition of philosophy with its concern for, as one exponent puts it, "the practical business of living intelligently". See Henry B. Veatch, **Aristotle: A Contemporary Appreciation**, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1974; Idem, **Rational Man: A Modern Interpretation of Aristotelian Ethics**, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1962.

28. **For The New Intellectual**, op cit, pp. 54, 192.

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## 11: CO-OPERATION WITHOUT COMMUNITY

### Contents:

- I: What is Community?
- II: Ethical Appeasement
- III: Co-operation Without Community
- IV: Co-operation Without Sacrifice
- V: The Self In Self-Interest

Notes

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Richard P Hiskes' book **Community Without Coercion: Getting Along in the Minimal State** (University of Delaware Press, Newark/Associated University Press, London, 1982; bracketed page references in the text refer to this work) is both heartening and infuriating. At a time when so much scholarship is little more than internal disputations between rival sects in the textual exegesis of Marxism, we find a new recruit (an assistant professor at the University of Connecticut) explicitly declaring his adherence to libertarianism as a philosophy "with which to organize the contemporary political world" (p. 17). Moreover, Professor Hiskes develops his thesis out of an analysis not only of the contemporary libertarian philosopher, Robert Nozick but of two neglected historical figures, Herbert Spencer and Benjamin Tucker (and he pays attention to those even more obscure nineteenth century English liberal anarchists, Auberon Herbert and Wordsworth Donisthorpe). While so many writers tend to take Mill or Bentham as paradigmatic representatives of liberalism, it is particularly refreshing to see such neglected, but important representatives of the more radical (and in my view, more viable) tradition

within liberalism, being resurrected.

What is infuriating however, is that in spite of his intellectual goal - a contemporary restatement of libertarianism - in spite of his use of many interesting historical sources, and in spite of occasional flashes of insight, Hiskes manages to get into an appalling analytical mess.

## **I: What is Community?**

Hiskes' theme in **Community Without Coercion** is, while accepting as the defining characteristics of libertarianism the ultimate moral principle of the intrinsic value of the individual, and the concept of free will and autonomy, to demonstrate that "individualist political thought is a **communitarian** as well as a **libertarian** doctrine" (p.12, my emphasis). He thus argues that "community" is also a "cardinal ideal" of libertarianism, and that libertarianism only has an "anticommunitarian **appearance**" (p. 14, my emphasis).

What exactly does Hiskes mean by "community"?

He recognises that the term is indeed "a rather murky political concept" (p. 21) with a profound "ideological cast" (p. 21). Thus, while the term "society" generally serves well as the designation for the totality of human relationships at the larger or "macro" level, "community" might seem merely a useful designation for small distinguishable groups "within" society (i.e., as in local "communities", villages, or communities of individuals practising a common trade, or sharing a particular characteristic or outlook). But Hiskes himself, in considering the work of both sociological theorists and socialist anarchists demonstrates the way in which "community" shifts from being merely a descriptive label into a normative, value laden concept.

For example, in the more methodologically individualist work of Robert MacIver (1) community is used as the descriptive term for subsets of interest relations or social structures

determined by such interests. For Ferdinand Tonnies (2), one of the founding fathers of sociology, community (**gemeinschaft**) eventually becomes, in Hiskes' words, "a moral imperative to be concerned with one's neighbours" (p.27). Much the same attitude is (albeit with less of Tonnies' Germanic mystical holism) in Raymond Plant's work (3). In sum, as Hiskes puts it, in common usage, "**community** denotes a moral commitment between persons that transcends self-interest and is **in no way related to it**" (p. 41, my emphasis).

The political aspect of this usage becomes even clearer in the work of socialist anarchists, with their myriad attacks on "the pathology of privacy", their militant anti-individualism and "communitarian" assertions. Hiskes is quite clear that in this common usage community as a concept has moved from a "semantic meaning" - i.e., one which strives for "clarity and eradication of emotive meaning" to "poetic meaning" - i.e., one which strives for the "inclusion of a moral perspective" (p. 53, quoting Joseph Gusfield). "Community" has, for much of academic scholarship, as well as for partisan political movements, become completely normative, an "object of quest", a "relationship" to be valued, a synonym for "caring". (4)

## **II: Ethical Appeasement**

One might think that the natural libertarian response to the way in which "community" has been rendered into a partisan weasel word, yet another piece of conceptual camouflage and propaganda for the brutalities and human degradation of collectivism, altruism, and statism, would be obvious. It should be one of justifiably angry exposure of such semantic dishonesty, and an analysis of the pathological processes of what Oakeshott has so penetratingly called the "militant anti-individual ... the individual **manque**", the individual who seeks to escape the alleged burdens of individuality, of personal responsibility and effort, for a realm of guaranteed "identity", status and security (5).

But this is **not** Hiskes' response. Why then does he want to demonstrate the strikingly para-

doxical view that normative "communitarianism", "community of caring", is a constituent of libertarianism? Fortunately he is quite candid in his intellectual motivation. He makes it utterly clear that he sees the success of libertarianism as dependent upon a demonstration that "individualism place(s) a high value on the achievement of true community even to the point of individual sacrifice"! (p.17). In his view, "to prove individualism capable of such community is to raise its **image** considerably" (p. 55, my emphasis). Indeed, "the efficacy and **moral acceptability** of individualism as a philosophy with wish to organise the contemporary political world" (p.17, my emphasis) is dependent for Hiskes upon a demonstration of libertarianism's alleged "communitarianism". In other words, individualism can only be made acceptable to Hiskes's significant others (his fellow academics?) only if it ceases to be individualistic!

What is so striking, so paradoxical, and indeed, so productive of infuriating intellectual gyrations is thus Hiskes' continuation of a formal avowal of libertarianism with an adherence to values and ideas diametrically opposed to it. He speaks about the alleged "**harsh** insistence [by libertarians] on rights and nonviolation of the individual" (p.142, my emphasis), as if it were the protection of individual freedom which constitutes "harshness", rather than the historical panoply of despotisms, statisms, dictatorships and Gulags erected upon or justified by the myriad ideologies of community and collectivism. Referring to the libertarian vision of a society based upon natural rights Hiskes comments that "such a description of human relations admittedly does not 'inspire'" (p. 136).

### **III: Co-operation Without Community**

It is at this point that one really questions Hiskes' degree of acquaintance with libertarianism, either contemporary or historical. Indeed, one's suspicions are raised somewhat by his comments that, in taking Spencer, Tucker and Nozick as representative figures one "embrace(s) all significant arguments presented today under the title of individualism" (p. 16). A reading of the most influential contemporary libertarian thinker, Ayn Rand, amazingly

absent from the above **troika** would - even without accepting her philosophy in full - certainly have helped clear up some of his confusions regarding egoism. It is particularly striking how Hiskes implicitly seems to accept the view of egoism and individualism as representing some sort of endorsement of individual **isolation**, in which individuals have no interest in, or concern with, others, with social relationships or with the "rights" of individual, **per se**.

Individualism and the libertarian movement broadly conceived has never had, in either analytical or normative terms, any view of the individual as an "isolated monad". Individualism does not decry or disvalue social co-operation or social relationships. What it holds is that such co-operation and such relationships exist only for the **sake** of the individual, not for the sake of some (non-existent) entity or process (whether termed society, state, nation, race, history etc). As the contemporary libertarian philosopher Eric Mack puts it, in his significantly titled essay "Society's Foe", the essence of libertarianism holds to a:

"[R]adical distinction between society, a complex network of free relationships among individuals and freely formed groups and the State, a coercive entity that directs people's actions, associations, and lives". (6)

The whole tradition of classical and free market economics is, of course, based on the analysis and advocacy of the benefits of co-operation within the market. As the free market economist William Smart put it in 1906, it is precisely the free market which creates a society of "service through competition" where "we are all servants of each other" in the process of production and trade (7). Indeed, as one of the greatest French libertarian economists, Frederic Bastiat put it in his essay "Justice and Fraternity", it is particularly ironic that those who call themselves "socialists" are those who believe in the **antagonism** of human interests, and the necessity of compulsory "**artificial organisation**", while individualists support "the necessary and progressive harmonization of man's interests" within a free society, the free market (8). Hiskes seems totally oblivious to such core values of libertarianism. It is doubly ironic that even the phrase "community without coercion" can be found in one major libertarian work,

**Citadel, Market and Altar** by Spencer Heath. Heath's book is in fact a paean of praise to the "socialization" of human energies from their "pre" - actually "anti-social" condition of predation and conflict into the condition of "reciprocal voluntary services" (9). He explicitly defines "sociality" as that nexus of relationships resulting from non-coercive market exchanges:

"The distinctively societal process is that of rationally, or numerically balanced, free and reciprocal energy transfers between and among members. This is the basic function or social metabolism whereby the societal life-form grows and is maintained ... In the market we find the social institution by which in a civilized community a substantial portion of the available population energy is transferred and transformed into services and into realizations of the common will and of individual desires." (10)

It is quite absurd for Hiskes to sound surprised when he finds individualists like "Spencer, Donisthorpe and Herbert, [recognizing] the need for communal arrangements in human relations and ... vigorous in their support for the goal of community" (p. 68). It is also confusing, for Hiskes thus shifts into using the term in its analytical/semantic, and not its normative/poetic sense. In fact, Hiskes repeatedly loses track of the specific meaning adhering to the term community throughout the book. At one moment community is taken in its "poetic" sense ("real community in the sense of caring", ie the submission of the individual to "society" and its alleged spokesmen), the next moment he is referring to someone's "propensity toward communalism" and "concern for community" merely because they recognize (as how can they not!) the importance of social co-operation.

#### **IV: Co-operation Without Sacrifice**

Also totally at variance with libertarianism is Hiskes' apparent belief that some sort of **sacrifice** is necessary for the functioning of a free and as he terms it, "communal" - society. Hiskes

seems to accept a portrayal of rights which "stipulates the sacrifice of varying degrees of autonomy in order to provide for the social exercise of personal rights and implies a need for interdependence as well as interaction between persons" (p. 126). Likewise, he seems to believe that "community" must somehow necessitate "sacrificing interests and possibly even rights for" (p. 142). Hence he declares that "What must be provided, then, if individualists like Nozick are to be shown as true and sincere communitarians is a conception of rights and interests that allows for the demands and sacrifices forced upon them by communal relationships." (p. 142). In other words, for libertarians to be recognised as caring and legitimate thinkers acceptable to statist and collectivists they must abandon the libertarian defence of individual rights and libertarianism itself! Hiskes thus contrasts the view of Spencer, Tucker and Nozick, that "the bottom line of co-operation in the individualist society" is "the benefits to be gained thereby for the individual who is concerned primarily for his own welfare" (p. 146) with "the sacrifice of that freedom, which is at times necessary for the advancement of the 'caring' communal relation" (p. 146).

In fact, it is quite unclear from Hiskes exactly what these "rights and interests" are that demand sacrifice, but the question is beside the point. In the libertarian view no such sacrifices are necessary to preserve an individualist order. To quote Eric Mack once more:

"Society is the exercising, and the modes and means of exercising, individual rights. In exercising these rights people acquire and define property, enter into contracts, and forge allocations of all sorts ... Individuals may even create institutions designed to help them to protect and exercise their Lockean rights [i.e. life, liberty, and property]. But such institutions are, at most, tools. They are not needed to work any essential transformation of the network of legitimate actions and relationships. These institutions merely secure freedom and peace by securing the natural rights of individuals. (11)

## V: The Self In Self-Interest

But perhaps the fundamental weakness of Hiskes' analysis lies in his constant, unexamined assumption regarding human self-interest, the underlying equations of self-interest/selfishness with human isolation, rapacity, indifference to others or to their rights. Here, of course, some sort of acquaintance with the Aristotelian/Objectivist/Ethical Egoist components of libertarianism - the approaches of Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard, the principal contemporary exponents of libertarianism whose existence seems to have escaped Hiskes' attention - would have put Hiskes onto a sounder path. As Tibor Machan has put it, the concept of self-interest is only meaningful in relation to a standard, "a standard ... possible by reference to the kind of selfhood in question" (12).

While many exponents of statism and collectivism attempt to use loaded concepts of human nature (in which selfishness is equated with bestiality) and reflected visions of society to posit inherent clashes between self-interest and human co-operation, for ethical egoists in the Aristotelian or objectivist mode there is no such clash - and hence no need for alleged sacrifices. As Erich Fromm - of all people - put it, the confusion largely arose from "the change from the objectivist into the erroneously subjectivist approach to self-interest. Self-interest was no longer to be determined by the nature of man and his needs; correspondingly the notion that one could be mistaken about it was relinquished and replaced by the idea that what a person felt represented the interests of his self was necessarily his true self-interest" (13).

Ironically, just when one is beginning to totally despair of Hiskes, he does seem to stumble upon this sort of insight. In his final chapter he does recognize that we must not ignore "the self in self-interest" (p. 159). He thus declares that "self-interest can be a moral motivation ... because of a particular conception of the self by the self-interested individual, the half of 'self-interest' usually ignored by political and ethical theorists" (p. 158). What he terms an "objectivization of the self", a full recognition of the reality of other persons, hence results in an "individualist community ... a possibility stemming solely from the rational pursuit of self-



interest" (p. 167). Hiskes concludes that this sort of analysis demonstrates how "the normative predicates of community can be extracted from the concept of self-interest and those predicates translated into a genuine concern for others that does not trounce upon the basic individualist concern with the freedom to pursue individual self-interest" (p. 171). Indeed, this is precisely what Rand, Rothbard, Machan, and the other Aristotelian libertarians do. But for reasons better known to himself Hiskes has chosen to ignore the work of such major libertarian thinkers in favour of his own confused meanderings and exercises in ethical and political appeasement.

Although, superficially at least Hiskes does seem eventually to arrive at a position akin to that of ethical egoist/natural rights libertarians, his passage to this destination is so wobbly and confused that one finds it hard to recommend to anyone. His constant and confusing usage of "community" in different senses (one moment communitarian "caring", the next as social co-operation), his equation of **humane** behaviour with **altruism** (the doctrine that moral actions must primarily serve others) do nothing but to confuse the issues under discussion. After repeated comments about the necessity of "sacrifice", in the final chapter this theme is abruptly dropped to be replaced by a whole new orientation (albeit basically correct in my view) regarding true self-interest. Moreover, it is surely only adding confusion to confusion to equate the sort of "community" (social order) that Hiskes apparently wants with the tradition of "communitarianism" advocated by both sociologists and various kinds of socialists, imbued as it is with virulently anti-individualistic values. It would surely be wiser to abandon the term "community" to those who have so thoroughly colonized it. Co-operation, as libertarians have repeatedly shown, requires none of the compulsion, coercion, collectivism, or submersion of the individual and his self-interest which the prophets of "community" have for centuries so vigorously advocated.

In all, Hiskes' book can only be judged, in my view, as a most disappointing failure. Confusion, rather than clarity, abounds and what value accrues to the reader will come more, I believe, from his own critical dissection of the text than from the author's analytical prowess.

## NOTES

1. Robert MacIver, **Community**, Macmillan, London, 1917.
2. Ferdinand Tonnies, **Community and Society**, Michigan State University Press, 1957.
3. Raymond Plant, **Community and Ideology**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1974.
4. A whole book, let alone an essay, could be written on the use of "community" in collectivist, statist, and anti-libertarian propaganda. Whilst writing this essay I encountered a particularly interesting example in a work by the American political scientist Henry S. Kariel. In his **Beyond Liberalism, Where Relations Grow**, Chandler and Sharp, San Francisco, 1977, the author blames his own feelings of personal despair, inconsequence, and futility on capitalist society. A vague and fatuous vision of a new community of "interconnectedness" and "open-ended" processes is presented as an alternative to capitalist alienation. See also Robert P. Wolffe, **The Poverty of Liberalism**, Beacon Press, Boston, 1968, Chapter 5, "Community", pp. 162-195, for a further example. And see Graeme Duncan "Comments on Some Radical Critiques of Liberal-Democratic Theory", in P. Birnbaum, et al., eds., **Democracy, Consensus and Social Contract**, Sage Publications, London, 1978, for a critically sympathetic overview of the communitarian tradition.
5. See Michael Oakeshott, "The Masses in Representative Democracy", in Albert Hunold, ed., **Freedom and Serfdom: An Anthology of Western Thought**, D. Reidel, Dordrecht, Holland, 1961, pp. 151-170; reprinted in William F. Buckley Jr., ed., **Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?: American Conservative Thought in the**

**Twentieth Century**, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1970, pp. 103-123; and in K. S. Templeton, Jr., ed., **The Politicization of Society**, Liberty Press, Indianapolis, 1979, p. 326.

6. Eric Mack, "Society's Foe", **Reason**, 8(5), September 1976, p. 34.
7. William Smart, **The Return to Protection: Being a Restatement of the Case for Free Trade**, Macmillan, London, 1906, 2nd. edn, pp. 4, 1.
8. "Justice and Fraternity" (1848) in Frederic Bastiat, **Selected Essays on Political Economy**, Foundation For Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y., 1964, p. 136. For Bastiat the central message of liberalism and economic science was the enunciation of "economic harmonies", to "prove undeniably the natural existence of the law of solidarity", **Harmonies of Political Economy**, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, n.d., p. 489. See also Ludwig von Mises, **Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis**, Jonathan Cape, London, 1951, p. 310 for a similar point on the truly social, uniting qualities of liberalism and private property. And see also Friedrich Hayek, **The Confusion of Language in Political Thought**, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1968, on the concept of spontaneous order.

Given the way in which socialists consistently portray liberalism and the free market (or the alleged case of its supporters) in the language of war, conflict or zero-sum games (e.g. the "rat race", "the law of the jungle", "dog-eat-dog", "nature red in tooth and claw", the "social darwinist" smear etc), it is interesting to note older and fairer historians of thought commenting on the liberal emphasis on social solidarity, its "discovery of the law of solidarity" in the free market, and the "extravagant ... eulogiums which [liberals] bestowed upon its working". See Charles Gide and Charles Rist, **A History of Economic Doctrines**, George G. Harrap, London, 1915, p. 607; and see also pp. 344-5.

9. Spencer Heath, **Citadel, Market and Altar**, Science of Society Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland, 1957, p. 39.
10. **Ibid**, pp. 48, 45. Heath develops the organismic analogy in a most interesting manner which does, in my view, seem to underline its core of truth without abandoning methodological individualism. Thus he writes: "In fact, the ultimate function of socialization of the human society unlike that of insects and animals, is the fulfilment of itself through service to, and the self-realization and fulfilment of, the individual units of which it is composed". (p. 209)
11. Eric Mack, "Society's Foe", **op. cit**, pp. 35-36.
12. Tibor R. Machan, **Human Rights and Human Liberties**, Nelson Hall, Chicago, 1975, p. 85.
13. Erich Fromm, **Man For Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1971, p. 134. Fromm's work, of course, is dominated by precisely the "fear of freedom", of the alleged burdens of individuality and autonomy, that he professed to explore.
14. In passing I must also take issue with one other point. On page 16 Hiskes makes the odd comment that Nozick does not make clear his debt to "Spencerean and anarchist varieties of individualist thought". Nozick's footnotes and bibliography render this observation palpably false.

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**Textual Note:** Some minor grammatical and stylistic alterations have been made.

## 12: THE CASE AGAINST A BILL OF RIGHTS

"Governments, like clocks, go from the motion men give them; and as governments are made and moved by men, so by them they are ruined, too. Therefore governments rather depend upon men, than men upon governments". William Penn

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Many advocates of freedom favour the idea of a Bill of Rights. Surely it must be a good idea, they think, to enshrine basic freedoms in such a document as a bulwark against collectivism and the expansion of state power. (1) Doesn't one of the freest societies in the world, the United States, owe much of its freedom to precisely such a Bill of Rights, embedded in a written constitution?

In my view such advocates of freedom are mistaken. They misunderstand the nature of how freedom in society is both attained and maintained, and are advocating a constitutional campaign which is in reality either irrelevant or positively harmful to the cause of individual liberty.

## **I: The Importance of Ideas**

An immediate riposte to the notion that a Bill of Rights is necessary for a free society is to point to the fact that other predominantly free societies, notably the United Kingdom, have enjoyed equally substantial liberties without such documents, or, indeed, even a written constitution. (2) But we must go further, and demonstrate **why** this is the case.

Freedom is attained in social life only when the ideas favourable to freedom gain intellectual predominance or hegemony. Freedom cannot be imposed mechanistically, so to speak. It is the product of an evolutionary process. I am not advancing an **exclusively** "intellectual interpretation of history" here. The role of economic interest, the role of predatory violence (both at an individual level and as exercised through those social agencies we term government or the "State") all play their part. Indeed, what is so depressing in the study of human history is precisely the **contingent** nature of human freedom, the remarkable convergence of so many favourable, but **exceptional**, factors to create the "European miracle", humanity's most free, rational, humane - highest - civilization so far. (3)

Ultimately, however, it is the fundamental ideas and values of a society which dictate its institutional form. The point about the American Constitution and its Bill of Rights (4) is that these were the manifestation of a long tradition of Anglo-American ideas, ideas which had gained a virtual hegemony in both countries. The views of the 18th Century Commonwealthmen, the Levellers, John Locke, Natural Law, the Scottish Enlightenment, emerging free market economic theory - these were just some of the myriad forms and varieties of classical liberalism which had permeated society from top to bottom. The American Constitution and the Bill of Rights were simply the triumphal keystone, the manifestation of this ideological power. (5)

## II: Intellectual Hegemony

Now a keystone might be necessary, but you do not attempt to erect a keystone without the rest of the arch. What is precisely lacking today is the rest of that ideological arch. Classical Liberalism/Libertarianism does not possess ideological hegemony. Only within the last 20 years has its fateful decline been reversed and an intellectual revival taken place. (6) There are many grounds for optimism. The renaissance of liberalism grows stronger with every day. In many parts of the world that revival is already being manifest in policy terms, in privatization and "creeping capitalism". Everywhere the crisis of socialism, in both theory and practice, becomes more apparent. But we don't have hegemony yet.

The only case for a Bill of Rights is in terms of my "keystone" analogy, as a mark of our victory. But to positively campaign for such a Bill now is fatuous. All such a campaign would do would be to divert scarce energies and resources from the real battle, that of re-establishing the intellectual and academic predominance of libertarian ideas. It would have no chance of enshrining **real** liberties in law. In reality such a campaign would attract every crank and panacea monger who would want to add his favourite "right" to the Bill. Because we do not yet have intellectual hegemony even our very concept of rights has been stolen and



distorted. Instead of the liberal concept of rights, the "negative" view of a social order in which individuals are freed from invasive force, most people conceive of rights as "positive" claims upon the life, liberty and property of others - hence a right to a job, a good education, welfare benefits, medical treatment, housing etc etc. If any Bill of Rights was actually put into practice it would at present invariably be a mishmash of real rights and such positive "rights". What good would that do the cause of liberty? Nothing whatever.

In fact, the world is already full of such pointless or positively harmful declarations. Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights contains precisely such an assertion, that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control". (7)

And, of course in many cases constitutional rules and Bills of Rights are, as in the cases of the Soviet Union or most of the "Third World" tyrannies, simply ignored. Equally typical is the inclusion of clauses of the sort proclaiming that all rights are void when the government sees good cause to ignore them! The European Convention on Human Rights is a particularly amusing example of this. Almost every ringing declaration of freedom is fraternally coupled with the following words:

"There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others". (8)

In other words, we can take away your rights whenever we want to!

Until libertarian hegemony is established it is exactly abortions like this that we would most probably be landed with if a campaign for a Bill of Rights was successful.

### **III: Do Bills of Rights Maintain Freedom?: The Real Power of Social Forces**

Bills of Rights do not actually maintain freedom. To put it crudely, if the civic order is dominated by liberal mores and ideas then a Bill of Rights isn't necessary. If it is not then a Bill of Rights won't help you. The Bill of Rights advocates basically suffer from a form of social reification. The Bill of Rights is simply a document, it has no reality except as a piece of paper outside of the ideas and behaviour of individuals. It was not the paper "checks and balances" of the American Constitution which maintained American freedom, it was the "invisible", but actually more real ones manifest in the ideas and actions of millions of Americans. The fact that people would rather go hungry than accept state welfare, that individuals simply would not put up with the sorts of interventionism now accepted as commonplace by contemporary Americans - this is the real power of ideas as social forces. It is the power of the social order, of civic society, not scraps of paper, that limited the American state. (9)

This is not, it should be added, a solely or distinctively libertarian insight. The American political scientist Robert Dahl, points out in his classic work, **A Preface to Democratic Theory** (10) that Machiavelli, "who was not a soft-headed observer of human behaviour, evidently believed that the basic check to tyranny was not so much a set of legal formulas about the prescribed distribution of certain controls - i.e., a formal constitution - as a network of habits and attitudes inculcated in the society". (11) Dahl himself persuasively explicates this view. The (constitutional) "separation of powers", so beloved of James Madison and the other American Founding Fathers has, in countless other constitutions, been of nought in preventing powerful minorities from exercising tyrannical power. "Whether or not powerful minorities or mass-based dictatorial leaders have refrained from establishing tyranny is clearly not related to the presence or absence of constitutional separation of powers ... The Madiso-

nian argument ... underestimates the importance of the inherent social checks and balances existing in every pluralistic society. Without these social checks and balances, it is doubtful that the intragovernmental checks on officials would in fact operate to prevent tyranny." (12) It is the presence or absence of "certain social prerequisites" which results in freedom or tyranny, and it is to these "first and crucial variables" (13) to which the political scientist, in Dahl's view, should pay attention. "The evidence ... of the contemporary world, the extent to which minorities are bedevilled by means of government action is dependent almost entirely upon non-constitutional factors; indeed, if constitutional factors are not entirely irrelevant, their significance is trivial as compared with the non-constitutional." (14) It is precisely because these social factors are somehow less concrete than scraps of paper that people find it hard to conceptualize them. It is the abstract, mental "chains" upon ourselves which largely dictate our behaviour - the rules and habits generated by our family structures, moral values and "sense of life" and embedded in every aspect of our individual and corporate life.

It is singularly ironic that it should prove necessary to point this out to many conservatives. For it is this insight that lies at the core of, for example, Michael Oakeshott's conservative philosophy. Oakeshott's critique of "the ideological style of politics" rests on the argument that political practice, and genuine theory, grow out of experience or "tradition", rather than the reverse. Constitutionalism of the sort advocated by the exponents of Bills of Rights shares in exactly the same fallacy as other radical and revolutionary forms of politics. Although not directly addressing this question Oakeshott's own words about the "ideological style" are equally relevant to constitutionalism. "(I)ts defect becomes apparent when we consider the sort of knowledge and the kind of education it encourages us to believe is sufficient for the activity of attending to the arrangements of a society. For it suggests that a knowledge of the chosen political ideology, and a political education confined to learning a catechism, can take the place of a tradition of political behaviour ... The arrangements of a society are made to appear, not as manners of behaviour, but as pieces of machinery to be transported about the world indiscriminately". (15)

#### IV: The American Constitutional Experience as a Test Case

American political and constitutional history offers ample evidence for the case against a Bill of Rights. When liberal hegemony was lost in America (from the turn of the century) and the social mores and predominant ideas became more collectivist and statist, then the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights simply did **not** serve as a bulwark of freedom.

What happened to the much vaunted Rights in the face of triumphant collectivism?

Firstly, they were simply amended. This option can never be prevented by bald declaration enshrined in a Bill of Rights. The 16th Amendment, authorizing direct national income tax, is a prime example of this. Or they were simply ignored. Various constitutional innovations can equally well occur without even the sanction of amendment. The establishment of the Interstate Commerce Commission (by the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887) was the first major ominous step of this sort, in which Congress delegated broad powers of a quasi-legislative, quasi-executive, quasi-judicial nature to a new entity. A fundamental departure from the separation of powers, the example was followed in such bodies as the Federal Trade Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the National Labour Relations Board. As one liberal historian has stated, they had "the cumulative effect of bringing to nought the means set up in the Constitution for disarming [factional interest] groups". (16)

Breaking the power of what they termed "faction" had always been a major goal of the Founding Fathers in their constitutional designs. (17) Those designs did **not** prevent the rise of faction (ie., special class interest). The establishment of the economic regulatory agencies (largely at the behest of the special interest themselves) and the raising to cabinet rank of the Department of Agriculture in 1889, to be followed by Commerce and Labour 1903 were further milestones in the establishment of the quasi-corporatist system that now exists in America. (18)

The development of the party system itself was also an extra-Constitutional development which some Founding Fathers hoped would not occur and whose role was certainly not envisioned in the Constitution. Their role, as Clarence Carson further pointed out (19) was to further empower faction by enabling them to determine policy across the lines of electoral districts. Madison had hoped that a large federal system would prevent the formation of large, nationally dominant factions.

## **V: The Role of "Interpretation"**

It might be plausibly argued that the Constitution and the Bill of Rights slowed down the governmental manifestation of collectivism in America, but I doubt if it could be shown that this was of any great magnitude. Although it might also be argued that collectivism and statism had to adopt certain judicial disguises, to dress themselves in constitutional terms, this was no great problem for them. (20)

The Founding Fathers must be spinning in their graves at the tortured interpretations and perversions of their constitutional creations. Again, to quote Clarence Carson:

"Much of the huge Federal establishment has been built by the exercise of powers that were not granted in the Constitution. Most of the regulations, restrictions, expenditures (excepting for defense) and far flung activities were not authorized by the Constitution. Nor have they been authorized by amendments. Instead, they have been acquired by reading into the Constitution what is not there, and promulgating mystifications about what is there." (21)

The general welfare clause has been interpreted as if it were a grant of power, and, in the historian's words, "Courts have turned limitations upon governments into requirements that governments provide some service". (22) The regulation of commerce clause (Article I, Sec-

tion 8) is perhaps the most notable example of flexible interpretation.

Only the wilfully blind can do other than conclude with Edwin J. Vieira, that "the Constitution, founded in natural law as an embodiment of and protection for individual rights, has been transformed into an instrument for the subordination of rights to an effectively unlimited government ruled - or, perhaps, **driven** is more descriptive - by the very passions the Founders most feared: avarice, ambition, and the love of power". (23)

## VI: The Role of the American Supreme Court

Although, ironically, the Founding Fathers perceived little if any role for judicial review the role of the Supreme Court as a bastion of liberty has boded large in the arguments of constitutionalists. But yet again the actual historical record of the American Supreme Court provides rather less than an overwhelming case for the efficacy of this mechanism.

As Robert Dahl has declared:

"[T]he policy views dominant on the Court are never for long out of line with the policy views dominant among the lawmaking majorities of the United States. Consequently it would be most unrealistic to suppose that the Court would, for more than a few years at most, stand against any major alternatives sought by a lawmaking majority". (24)

Elsewhere Dahl goes into some detail. Up to 1956 the Supreme Court had declared Congressional legislation unconstitutional in 77 cases. In almost a third of these cases the aims of the legislation were achieved by other means; in one fifth of the cases this occurred in four or less years. In only four cases were more than 20 years required. (25) "There is", he concludes " ... no case on record where a persistent law-making majority has not, sooner or later,

achieved its purpose". (26)

One is tempted to say that the Supreme Court was of least use precisely when it was most needed. Hence Article 13, which outlaws slavery and involuntary servitude, and which clearly rules out conscription, was blatantly disregarded. The Supreme Court refused to accept appeals in those terms, claiming it was a "political issue" (which, of course it was, and which was precisely what the Court was there to decide).

And when the New Deal 'revolution' occurred the Supreme Court turned out to be a frail guardian of liberty. Judges who still adhered to the older views died, were intimidated by political threats and pressures of various sorts, or simply succumbed to what they saw as an inevitable tide in the affairs of men. (27)

A government of laws is of necessity law made and administered by men. The judiciary proved no more immune than any other part of society to the rise of collectivism which applied itself to redefining and reconstructing legal thought. (28)

As Clinton Rossiter has written, "the Court's power of judicial review is least useful when most needed ... The fact is that the Court has done more over the years to expand than to contract the authority of the President ...". (29)

In fact, the ineffectiveness of the Supreme Court in defending civil liberties does not date from merely the New Deal. One hardly has to approve of the respective causes penalized to recognize the reality of one legal scholar's observation that "[the] 140 Years between ratification of the First Amendment and **Near v. Minnesota** span a period when almost all the civil liberties of individuals were denied to citizens who were also abolitionists, religious zealots, suspected Confederate sympathisers, foreign-born members of the Industrial Workers of the World (or even obstreperous native IWWers), pacifists, conscientious objectors, supporters of the new-born Soviet Union, labour leaders, or suffragettes". (30)

## VII: A Symbolic Function?

Nigel Ashford has argued (31) that Bills of Rights and constitutions can have symbolic and propagandistic value. He echoes here the sentiments expressed by Founding Father Edmund Randolph, for whom a Bill of Rights in the Virginia Constitution was "a perpetual standard ... around which the people might rally". (32) Dissidents can appeal even to the Soviet Constitution or the UN Universal Declaration of Rights. But these are, as we have already argued, grievously flawed documents. Why not appeal to some more consistent and more radical Natural Law or some body of philosophic thought, and in the process, popularize and expound those ideas? Appealing to a flawed and ambiguous document might seem a clever tactic in the short run but does not further one's long range goal, the unambiguous establishment of one's values. Other forms of reliance on symbolic politics tend to be even more fatuous. Ironically, America was in many respects more free when the cult of the Constitution was less predominant than after it reached, in the words of one historian "a position of near sacredness". (33) Veneration for a document like the Constitution frequently goes hand in hand with either ignorance of its content or a lack of interest in its application.

Again we return to the our constant refrain that the bulwark of liberty rests only in the opinions of the public. It is interesting that many of the American Founding Fathers opposed the inclusion of a Bill of Rights in the Constitution. Although many of them were motivated by a hidden agenda (stronger government) their opposition was not entirely disingenuous. Alexander Hamilton argued about the difficulty of making cast iron, unambiguous definitions regarding, for example, liberty of the press, that could not ultimately be evaded. "I infer that its security", he argued, "whatever fine declarations may be inserted in any constitution respecting it, must altogether depend on public opinion, and on the general spirit of the people and of the government. And here, after all ... must we seek for the only solid basis of all our rights". (34) Another Federalist argued that although there was no way to predict in advance what laws may be necessary and proper "this we may say - that, in exercising those powers, the Congress



cannot legally violate the natural rights of an individual". (35) It is, in my view, precisely the standard of natural rights that must be raised, not simply on one piece of paper, but perpetually and universally, in the art, culture, ethics and scholarship of a society. Nothing less than total hegemony for individualism can secure individual liberty.

Interestingly enough a recent writer, Herbert J. Storing supports the Federalist contention. Would America have been less free without the Bill of Rights? He replies:

"Without a Bill of Rights our courts would probably have developed a kind of common law of individual rights to help to test and limit governmental power. Might the courts thus have been compelled to confront the basic questions that 'substantive due process', 'substantive equal protection', 'clear and present danger', etc., have permitted them to conceal, even from themselves? Is it possible that without a Bill of Rights we might suffer less of that ignoble battering between absolutistic positivism and flaccid historicism that characterizes our constitutional law today?". (36)

### **VIII: Contradictions in the Case For Constitutionalism**

When we examine the detailed arguments of constitutionalists and advocates of Bills of Rights we generally find them rife with inner contradictions.

Let us examine the case made by the turn of the century classical liberal, William Sharp McKechnie, in his study of the decline of British freedom and the rise of democratic despotism, **The New Democracy and the Constitution**. (37)

McKechnie concedes that:

"Legal restraints are likely to prove bonds of paper, if unaccompanied by the moral qualities that enforce them, and by the spirit of compromise and watchfulness that recognises, in an invasion of the rights of one man, an invasion of the rights of all. If public opinion and respect for the spirit of the constitution do not actively support the safeguards contained in legal documents, these are likely to prove mere dead letters. The electors need, for their own good and that of the commonwealth, education in the principles of political science ... Constitutional restraints, without an enlightened sense of citizenship, are thus far from being the whole solution". (38)

Precisely.

But McKechnie then proceeds to argue that such restraints "are one essential element in that solution. Further, their mere existence helps to induce in the nation a more equitable frame of mind". (39) He points to the American Constitution as a desirable model to contrast with the "unrestrained omnipotence of a one-chambered Parliament". "The mere existence", he claims, "of a written Constitution raises a series of barriers to restrict the ascendancy of the many over the few. Fundamental principles ... cannot suddenly be upset by the insertion of a few words in an ordinary act of the Legislature, as may be done in England. Under any form of written Constitution, individuals are sure of, at least, a few fixed cities of refuge that cannot be engulfed by revolutionary legislation". (40)

McKechnie may be forgiven for not foreseeing just how ineffective that Constitution was to become as a dam against the tidal wave of revolutionary legislation. We also profit from the countless contemporary examples of exemplary constitutions (including even that of the Soviet Union) which possess no significance whatsoever for the social and political realities of their respective nations. He was at fault in not considering how the creation of a new constitution, or written constitutional safeguards, was possible when that "enlightened sense of citizenship"

was already increasingly absent. Modern exponents of the same position have no such excuse, however.

Writing later, and from a Liberal Conservative position, James Beck in his **The Constitution of the United States** (41) argued as follows:

"The British Constitution has as its only sanction the acquiescence of the living generation; for there is no feature of the British Government and no principle of liberty which the House of Commons may not now, by a bare majority, impair or destroy". (42)

The American Constitution, in his view, represents in contrast "the most conspicuous and effective manifestation of a higher law ... a noble and serviceable temple of Liberty and Justice". (43)

Yet as he himself admits, the Constitution **can** be amended, and he further concedes that such amendments are necessary to adapt governmental forms to the alleged requirements of a "complex age". (44) But amendments can be "foreign to its nature and destructive to its purposes", especially when supported "by an aggressive and well-organized minority". (45) He even further admits that the Constitution has "been profoundly modified by public opinion" and that "(a)s a result, many of its essential principles have been ... subverted, and many others are today threatened by direct attack". (46) Yet again, he admits that as "a sanctuary against confiscation" (of property) the Constitution has "only been partly successful", and that in some respects the existence of the Constitution has "not only thrown men of property off their guard" but has actually "lessened the spirit of constitutional morality". (47) In his final pages Beck concedes virtually the entire burden of our argument. The Constitution, he concedes, "can have no inherent vigour to perpetuate itself. If it ceases to be of the spirit of the people, then the yellow parchment, whereon it is inscribed, can avail nothing. The American people must write the compact, not with ink upon parchment, but with 'letters of living

light' - to use Webster's phrase - upon their hearts". (48)

Yes indeed, but what then remains of the case for constitutionalism and a Bill of Rights?

### **IX: Constitutionalism as a Sign of Desperation**

Libertarian and Conservative advocates of Bills of Rights sometimes point to the hostility of socialists to such documents as proof of their value. During the late 1960s the Labour Party opposed various Conservative proposals to introduce a Bill of Rights. Labour MP Alex Lyon thus opposed the establishment of any, as he saw it, conservatively motivated body (like a constitutional or supreme court) as regressive, since the subsequent "inflexibility of our machinery for changing the law when obvious social injustice appeared, would make it a gravely retrograde measure for human liberty". (49) Similar statements have recently been made by Deputy Labour Party leader Roy Hattersley, who opposed current proposals for a constitutional Bill of Rights by claiming that "True liberty requires action from the government", and that a Bill of Rights would obstruct the achievement of positive freedom. (50) Another socialist writer, Janet Daley, also attacked such proposals. A Bill of Rights would, in her view, "create a cumbersome, reactionary monolith which slows government response to public opinion, sometimes fatally". In her view such a Bill could only be a potential obstacle to the extension of "democratic rights", by which she makes it quite clear that she means positive claims upon the property of others and interference in the voluntary decisions of individuals. (51)

And a jolly good thing too, might any libertarian conclude. But we should not take our policies merely from a reversal of our opponents positions. Rather, we need to look at the disputes over constitutions and Bills of Rights in their full political and historical contexts.

It is noticeable that the great movement for a Bill of Rights amongst British anti-socialists took

off during the late 1960s. It was then that Conservatives like Lord Hailsham (Quintin Hogg) attacked "Elective Despotism" and Lord Lambton introduced a Ten-Minute Bill for a Bill of Rights to "preserve the rights of the individual", specifically against "anti-racist" infringements of freedom of speech, Labour policies threatening private education, the powers of factory and health inspectors, and the Town and Country Planning Acts. (52) This was a period in which liberals were in despair. The ratchet of socialism seemed irreversible. Socialism, trade union power, socialist violence - all seemed supreme and undefeatable. Constitutional manoeuvrings appeared the only way in which the process of decline could be delayed or brought to some sort of a halt.

But now the reverse is the case. It is the so-called "left" which is in despair against the growing reversal of socialism both politically and intellectually. The voices of Roy Hattersley and Janet Daley are the exceptions. It is now the socialists who have formed an organization, Charter 88, to campaign for a written constitution and Bill of Rights to protect "social progress" and "freedom" against the alleged authoritarianism of Margaret Thatcher. (53)

What this underlines is how Bill of Rights campaigns tend to be little more than a desperate flaying around when one has been politically defeated. We should welcome Socialism's recent orientation to such nostrums. It is a welcome sign of their growing demoralization and a self-imposed distraction from any more serious intellectual counterattack on their part. For libertarians or conservatives to now get involved in this sort of campaign would be at the present time a veritable seizing of defeat from the jaws of victory.

### **X: A Good Campaign Issue?**

But wouldn't campaigning for a Bill of Rights be a good idea? No! The Libertarian and Conservative movements following the Second World War have been plagued by the constant error of going for the "quick fix": sometimes it is a constitutional amendment, sometimes it is

a populist campaign, sometimes it is nobbling a few politicians, sometimes setting up a new political party, sometimes an excessive concentration on immediate policy issues, sometimes pouring millions into glossy 'professional' magazines which lack any real readership or support. (54) Campaigning for a Bill of Rights is simply another variation on the same theme, and it would be as equally ineffective as all the other nostrums. Ironically, the real political impact that the libertarian revival has had has been as the result of the percolation of the ideas expounded by mere scribblers and theorists. This is not to argue that there is nothing that can be done to assist this process. Far from it. A pro-capitalist Engels could have as much of an impact as the original one. But that impact can only be achieved by the financing and promotion of the struggle for broad ideological hegemony. A Bill of Rights campaign can only divert our scarce resources from the countless intellectual tasks (in sociology, history, psychology, economics, foreign policy, political science etc) that are necessary to regain intellectual hegemony. It is a pointless luxury we cannot afford. (55)

## **XI: Conclusion**

I am aware, of course, that the case I have presented here has some fairly broad implications for liberal political philosophy as a whole. The case against A Bill of Rights is largely a case against constitutionalism per se, and the classical liberal concept of the limited state usually rests upon a doctrine of the constitutional limitation of state power. It is obviously apparent that I believe that no such limitation can be effective, and that liberal constitutionalism is fundamentally flawed in its understanding of power and the state. Liberalism and libertarianism need to look elsewhere for the means by which the aggressive use of force is minimised and individual rights respected. Those means, in my view, lie in the strengthening of what we might term "social power" and the whole moral and psychological structure of society, and by what Proudhon called "the dissolution of government in the economic organism". (56)

The demonstration of this positive alternative is obviously out of the question in a short essay

such as this. Nevertheless, I believe I have demonstrated my negative case, the case against a Bill of Rights, and I hope that this demonstration will deter anyone presently set upon embarking on the pursuit of this political holy grail.

In summary then, for advocates of free enterprise, individual freedom and the open society to launch into enthusiastic campaigns for a Bill of Rights would be a major, perhaps catastrophic, mistake. The advocates of such a scheme fatally misunderstand the real social dynamics that maintain, or fail to maintain, freedom. Any campaign for such a Bill can only result, in the present ideological correlation of forces, in ineffective and/or confused scraps of paper possessing no social force. Worse, such campaigns can only divert resources and efforts from the real route to ultimate political victory over the forces of collectivism and statism - the establishment of massive intellectual hegemony. Any diversion of resources, in terms of finance or personnel, would be a tragic error.

#### NOTES

1. For a useful survey of recent opinion in Britain about a Bill of Rights see Michael Zander, **A Bill of Rights?**, Sweet and Maxwell, London, 1985, pp. 1-26 and Philip Norton, **The Constitution In Flux**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1982, pp. 244-260. And see also Colin Campbell, ed., **Do We Need a Bill Of Rights?**, Temple Smith, London, 1980.
2. Of course, as Philip Norton writes: "Britain already has a Bill of Rights, that enacted in 1689. That measure effectively consolidated the Constitutional Settlement of 1688 and stipulated the relationship between the Crown and Parliament. Though it embodied references to what would be considered basic rights, it was not a 'Bill of Rights' in the sense in which the term has

been used in contemporary debate ... There is no enumerated code of human rights embodied, via statute, in British constitutional law", **Ibid**, p. 244.

Michael Zander refutes the sometimes heard assertion that Bills of Rights are "un-British" by pointing out that "is difficult to sustain in view of the fact that we virtually invented Bills of Rights with Magna Carta 1215 and the Bill of Rights 1689", **Ibid**, p. 43.

3. This will undoubtedly be cited as "racism" on my part by the "left", who now defame Western civilization and preach cultural relativism in order to impose the "benefits" of wretched "Third World" collectivist despotism and primitivism. The superiority of Western civilization has nothing to do with race, and has been created and adopted by diverse racial groups. It is a product of universal humanity at its best.

For an excellent brief survey of some of the factors involved in the European Miracle see John A. Hall, **Powers and Liberties**, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1986.

4. Indeed, in America the growth of liberty was especially connected with written codes and statutes. See Clinton Rossiter, **Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty**, Harcourt & Brace, New York, 1953, pp. 26-30.
5. See Bernard Bailyn, **The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution**, Harvard University Press, 1982 and Edward S. Corwin, **The 'Higher Law' Background of the American Constitution**, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1979. Actually, to be more accurate, the Constitution was something of a step backwards. Arguably it was more a product of the efforts of conservative elements who sought greater state power for economic reasons,



and was a reverse on the more decentralized and less statist Articles of Confederation. The Bill of Rights was actually added as something of an afterthought in order to assuage the justifiable doubts of those who feared the proposed stronger government. Of course, it is significant that those who were in some respects less committed to a truly liberal social order still had to express themselves in its terms and framework, and concede the Bill. This should be pointed out for the sake of historical accuracy, although not really germane to the burden of our general argument about Bills of Rights. See Herbert Storing, ed., **What The Antifederalists Were For**, University of Chicago Press, 1982.

6. See my essay "The New Enlightenment", in Arthur Seldon, ed., **The 'New Right' Enlightenment**, Economic and Literary Books, Sevenoaks, Kent, 1985.
7. See also the contribution by Chris Pond of the Low Pay Unit in Paul Sieghart, **Human Rights in the United Kingdom**, Frances Pinter, London, 1989, and Stephen Pogany's argument for the inclusion of "social" and "economic" rights in a Bill of Rights in his "The Content of a Bill of Rights", **The Juridical Review**, 23 April 1978. On the "negative" versus "positive" rights issue, see Maurice Cranston, **What Are Human Rights?**, Bodley Head, London, 1972. On the Soviet constitution, amongst others, see S. E. Finer, **Five Constitutions**, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1979.
8. See "Appendix I: The European Convention on Human Rights, Articles 1 to 18 and First Protocol", in Zander, **op. cit.**, p. 97 **passim**.
9. I am, of course, painting with broad brush strokes. America was never as free as some would like to portray it in retrospect. It was marred by slavery and restrictions of the rights of women. The eternal war

between state power and social power, between those who sought wealth by the means of the market and those who sought it by coercive, political means was present from the very start. The general point, and the general picture, is nevertheless true.

10. Robert Dahl, **A Preface to Democratic Theory**, Chicago University Press, 1956.
11. **Ibid.**, p. 18.
12. **Ibid**, pp. 21-22.
13. **Ibid**, p. 83.
14. **Ibid**, p. 135.
15. Michael Oakeshott, "Political Education", in Peter Laslett, ed., **Philosophy, Politics and Society**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1956, p. 11. I should add here that I do not agree with Oakeshott's approach in totality. He seems to me to erroneously downplay the constructive aspects of intellectual abstraction. Moreover, one can still accept the core of his analysis of the role of tradition and the emergence of ideas from meditation on practice without denying that reason **can** identify **abstract truths** about human nature and the most beneficial forms of practice.
16. Clarence B. Carson, **The Fateful Turn: From Individual Liberty to Collectivism 1880-1960**, Foundation For Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson, New York, 1963, p. 116. See Carson's list of unconstitutional actions in **The Flight from Reality**, Foundation For Economic Education, Irvington-on-Hudson,

New York, 1969, p. 439. And see also Thomas J. Norton, **Undermining the Constitution**, Devin Adair, New York, 1951.

17. See especially Madison's famous Federalist Paper No. 10, in Alexander Hamilton et al, **The Federalist Papers**, New American Library, New York, 1961, pp. 77-84.
18. See Carson, **op. cit.**, p. 117.
19. **Ibid**, p. 421. US monetary history provides a further example of the unconstitutional exercise of power. The Founding Fathers envisaged a minimal federal role in the monetary system, and the Constitution authorized no government issue of money and no central bank. Despite that Congress proceeded to issue currency, establish national banks, and restrict the monetary choices of individuals. By the 1930s US citizens were prohibited from owning any monetary gold at all. See Henry Mark Holzer, **Government's Money Monopoly: Its Source and Scope and How To Fight It**, Books In Focus, New York, 1981.
20. For example, Owen M. Fiss, in his "Two Models of Adjudication", in Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schambra, **op. cit.**, offers an explicitly collectivist/communalist "new mode of litigation .... structural reform" as in keeping with the activist/interventionist state. He contrasts it with the revival of the "nightwatchman state" in contemporary libertarianism and claims that libertarianism "would debase the great public text of modern America, the Constitution", p. 49. Similarly, Henry Shue in "Subsistence Rights: Shall We Secure **These** Rights?", in the same volume, argues that positive subsistence rights are "not in conflict with the U.S. Bill of Rights", p. 75.
21. Carson, **The Flight from Reality**, **op. cit.**, p. 428.

22. **Ibid**, p. 448.
23. Edwin Vieira, Jr., "Rights and the United States Constitution: The Declension From Natural Law to Legal Positivism", **Georgia Law Review**, 13(4), Summer 1979, p. 1500.
24. Robert A. Dahl, "Decision-Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as a National Policy-Maker", in Brifman Vanderoef, ed., **The Fiber of Democracy**, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1970, p. 332.
25. **A Preface To Democratic Theory, op. cit.**, pp. 109-110.
26. **Ibid**, p. 110.
27. The Court did nullify two of the central acts of the early New Deal, the N.R.A. and the A.A.A. But Franklin Roosevelt then threatened it in 1937 with his Court Reorganization Bill and it succumbed in its opposition to the New Deal. See Eric F. Goldman, **Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of American Reform**, Vintage Books, New York, 1960, pp. 277-279; S. E. Morison & H. S. Commager, **The Growth of the American Republic**, Vol. II, Oxford University Press, New York, 1962, pp. 733-735. Morison and Commager stress the "strategic retreat" and "timely switch" of the Court. Needless to say the latter, as confirmed statist, disapprove of the Court's original and allegedly outmoded stand and approve its ultimate flexibility. The abandonment of the protection of economic liberty by the Supreme Court is also described in Richard Epstein, **Takings**, University of Chicago Press, 1985.
28. See Goldman, **op. cit.**, pp. 103-108, on Legal Reform Darwinism and

"sociological jurisprudence".

29. Clinton Rossiter, **The American Presidency**, Rupert Hart-Davis/Harvest, London, 1960, pp. 58-59.
30. In a personal communication.
31. Robert A. Rutland, "How the Constitution Protects Our Rights: A Look At the Seminal Years", in Robert A. Goldwin and William A. Schambra, eds., **How Does the Constitution Secure Rights?**, American Enterprise Institute, Washington, 1985, p. 12.
32. Quoted in Herbert J. Storing, "The Constitution and the Bill of Rights", in Goldwin and Schambra, **Ibid**, p. 31.
33. Goldman, **op. cit.**, p. 68.
34. Federalist Paper No. 84, **op. cit.**, pp. 514-515.
35. Quoted in Storing, **op. cit.**, p. 25.
36. **Ibid**, p. 26.
37. William Sharp McKechnie, **The New Democracy and the Constitution**, John Murray, London, 1912.
38. **Ibid**, p. 175.
39. **Ibid**, pp. 175-6.

40. **Ibid**, pp. 176, 177.
41. James Beck, **The Constitution of the United States**, Oxford University Press, 1924.
42. **Ibid**, p. x.
43. **Ibid**, p. xi.
44. **Ibid**, pp. 211, 231.
45. **Ibid**, p. 269.
46. **Ibid**, pp. 271-272.
47. **Ibid**, p. 287.
48. **Ibid**, pp. 316-317.
49. Quoted in Zander, **op. cit.**, p. 4.
50. Agenda, **The Guardian**, December 12, 1988.
51. "Wrong Way To Rights", **The Times**, January 14, 1989.
52. See Zander, **op. cit.**, pp. 3, 5-6.
53. See "(Editorial) Why Britain Needs A Written Constitution", **The Observer**,

December 4, 1988; the debates appearing in **The Guardian**, December 19, 1988 and January 16, 1989; and Richard Holme and Michael Elliott, **1688-1988: Time for a New Constitution**, Macmillan, London, 1988. **The Observer** claims that the Charter is "signed by an impressive array of people of widely divergent political views". Not surprisingly for **The Observer** this is untrue. The Charter is supported by 57 varieties of socialists, to be sure, including a large number of "centrist" and "moderate" socialists who would perceive themselves as merely men and women of good will, such is the power of false consciousness. Regarding the accuracy of their claims about Margaret Thatcher's "authoritarianism" it should be pointed out that her government has taken a number of objectionable actions from the point of view of libertarianism. However it is not these that upset the socialists of all stripes. What is enraging them is the loss of their hegemony, the (oh, all too slow!) reversal of their gains. The reductions in their small bureaucratic empires and cushy state subsidized bodies, the fact that trade unionists no longer have a total **carte blanche** to harass and murder people, the occasional effective action against terrorists - it is these that constitute Mrs. Thatcher's crimes (rather than her real errors in interfering with moral and social freedoms or in trying to rig markets by phony, monopolized privatizations).

54. Larry Abrahams, of Freedom Inc., in a personal conversation pointed out the absurdity of the situation. We find conservatives, who allegedly understand the role and power of tradition and slow social forces, constantly haring after short term, "instant solutions" and sudden "revolutionary" changes. Conversely, Socialists, who adhere to fanciful views about sudden revolutionary and "popular" changes, actually knuckle under to the real long-term dedicated work that achieves real change.

55. For a more detailed presentation of the arguments made here see the ongoing series "Tactical Notes" published by the Libertarian Alliance, London.
56. Pierre Joseph Proudhon, **The General Idea of Revolution in the 19th Century**, (1851), quoted in Paul Eltzbacher, **Anarchism**, Chip's Bookshop, New York, n.d. [1900] I am not impressed by either the feasibility of Friedrich Hayek's proposal in "A Model Constitution", in **Law, Legislation and Liberty: Vol. III, The Political Order of a Free People**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979, or the various proposals drawn from public choice/economics of politics analyses by James Buchanan. I share Professor Charles Rowley's more pessimistic view about "meddlesome" individuals and activities which seems to be the more accurate lesson taught by the economics of politics. See Charles K. Rowley, "Market 'Failure' and Government 'Failure'", in James M. Buchanan, et al, **The Economics of Politics**, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1978, especially pp. 41-42.

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**13: LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE STARS:  
THE IDEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SCIENCE FICTION**

"It is in the methodology of scientific thought that  
the salvation - if any of humanity rests.' Isaac Asimov. (1)

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- II: Political Rationalism
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The very name "science fiction" is no accident, no mere matter of semantic contingency. As the author of one critical history of the genre has put it, "science fiction ... is really not so much a literary genre as a point of view" (2) and that point of view is overwhelmingly a scientific and **metascientific** one.

The unifying feature that runs throughout most Science Fiction is not a **literary** characteristic, involving matters of style, form or symbol, it is primarily an **ideological** one, a nexus of values and views regarding man and the universe. Colin Wilson has summed it up incisively in his **The Strength To Dream: Literature and the Imagination:**

"Science fiction sprang from the progressive beliefs that are the essence of science. The spirit of science is a spirit of enterprise . . . [Science Fiction] is an attempt to communicate the authentic vision of science through fiction." (3)

I have employed the term **metascientific** deliberately, since Science Fiction is not merely a literary exploration of particular scientific, cosmological or technological ideas, extrapolations of the individual or social effects of particular inventions or social trends (although it can be all these things) but because it embodies what Peter Medawar has called "the new spirit", the intellectual outlook which can be "thought of not as scientific, but something conducive to science" (4). It embodies the Faustian or Promethean impulse, the spirit of individualism, of self-confident rationality, of bold conjecture and refutation, the assumption of the accessibility of reality to human intelligence and the possibility and desirability of enhancing human existence.

It is no accident that Science Fiction emerged as a distinct genre (or, rather, was perceived as such) while "mainstream" literature became fixated upon delineations of character, the novel of manners as an aesthetic summum bonum, or upon doctrines of "naturalism" and "realism" which consigned the individual to the role of a victim or plaything of forces beyond his control. Literature became dominated by the ethos of an "Age of Defeat", in Colin Wilson's phrase, of either "the unheroic hypothesis" or the "discussion of triviality" (5). Literary and stylistic experimentation seemed devoted only, as one American has put it, to "disillusionment, cynicism, disgust and gnawing envy" or in "making delicate picture-puzzles out of the butt-ends of life" (6). So called **avant-garde** forms increasingly reflected "the flight from reason" and "disgust ... with the idea of science" (7), dominated by, and voking, epistemological and perceptual chaos.

While a voluntaristic and rationalistic image of man was preserved to some degree in what Ayn Rand had called "bootleg" forms of romanticism, in adventure, detective and thriller genres, these forms were generally intellectually - and sometimes aesthetically - second rate.

Only Science Fiction was characterized by a concern with higher intellectual horizons. It is most accurately defined as, in John J. Pierce's phrase, "eschatological romanticism", an intellectual orientation to "first and last things" (8).

It is important to realize that even the crudest sub-forms of Science Fiction, the so-called "space opera" adventure story as found in the "pulp" of the 1930s and 1940s and still with us today, is not without philosophic significance. The characteristic of "action, conflict and suspense" are reflections of the Aristotelian, volitionist view of man, in which "purpose", as Science Fiction author Jack Williamson has put it, is "the distinguishing quality of life" (10).

### **I: In Defence of Science**

Many Science Fiction authors and critics have been quite explicit in their commitment to science and the voluntaristic concept of man. Critic P. Schuyler Miller has put it as follows:

"In the present mode of mainstream fiction (Everyman) is a symbol for a humanity to whom the world - society, the system, the Establishment - does things. He may struggle; he may fight back; he will certainly scream and make speeches; but he is essentially passive, a born loser.

The Everyman of science fiction, on the contrary, does things to the world. He is the subject, not the object of the action. He schemes, he fights, and he may talk too much, but he assumes that he can and will win ... and usually does." (11)

Robert A. Heinlein was even more scathing in his rejection of the "sick literature being peddled by the 'mainstream'", and emphasized the didactic value of Science Fiction in encouraging rationalist attitudes:

"[Science Fiction] preaches the need for freedom of the mind and the desirability of knowledge; it teaches that prizes go to those who study, who learn, who soak up the difficult fields such as mathematics and engineering and biology. And so they do! The prizes of the universe go only to those able and equipped to reach out for them. In short, science fiction is preparing our youngsters to be mature citizens of the galaxy ... as indeed they will have to be." (12)

Against the prevalent mainstream literary themes of "alienation" and "I am a stranger and afraid in a world I never made", Heinlein replied:

"Not true! 'I am not a stranger and I am not afraid in a world I am happy to make ... and I am damned from here to eternity only if I abandon my human intelligence and, sheepishly, give up the struggle! That is the answer of science fiction, and that is why it is alive when most of our current literature is sick and dying.'" (13)

Similarly, Isaac Asimov has argued that while Science Fiction can and does explore dangers in science and technology and progress, its fundamental attitude is still constructive:

"Knowledge has its dangers, yes, but is the response to be a retreat from knowledge? Are we prepared then to return to the ape and forfeit the very essence of humanity? Or is knowledge itself to be used as a barrier against the danger it brings."

Whether individual scientists are treated as heroes or villains, Asimov continued:

"[S]cience and intelligence, as abstract forces, are represented sympathetically.

Scientific research is presented, almost invariably, as an exciting and thrilling process; its usual ends as both good in themselves and good for mankind; its heroes as intelligent people to be admired and respected." (14)

## II: Political Rationalism

"A conscious or unconscious conception of human nature underlies every choice of social or political values," declared political philosopher Ellen M. Wood in her book **The Mind and Politics** (15). It is hardly surprising, given Science Fiction's philosophic orientation that political themes have boded large, nor that these themes have generally been of a liberal, or libertarian, sort. Although, of course, the rationalist outlook can express itself in the form of a technocratic socialism (as in H. G. Wells, for example) (16) most Science Fiction authors have recognized the pseudo-scientific or "scientistic" nature of the politics of "social engineering" and "planning" (17), and the link between science and freedom, the "open mind" and the "open society" (18).

In Robert A. Heinlein's voluminous work there is a constant exploration of the issues of individual liberty versus the "parasitic" and "'fumbling" state, rationality versus religious dogmatism and theocratic politics, individual merit versus racism, individual happiness versus anti-sexual pathology ("the most mammoth hoax in history") (19), and constant opposition to the myriad doctrines of the "organic society", whether in its left or right wing forms. There is a strong note of pessimism in Heinlein's work, an awareness of the fact that there is only an "extremely tiny fraction who think regularly, accurately, creatively, and without self-delusion" (20). He has thus never ceased exploring different political and institutional means to encourage individual freedom and responsibility, from the "armed citizenry" of **Beyond This Horizon**, the restricted franchise of **Starship Troopers** (which attempts to link "ultimate authority" to "the maximum responsibility") and the "rational anarchy" of **The Moon is a Harsh Mistress**.

The note of pessimism is more pronounced in the work of H. Beam Piper, whose own fictional "future history" is one of the cycle of the rise and fall of civilizations, the apparently inevitable abandonment of the responsibilities of rational citizenry and the rise of the "barbarians ... the people who don't understand civilization, and wouldn't like it if they did. The hitchhikers. The people who create nothing, and who don't appreciate what others have created for them and who think civilization is something that just exists and all they have to do is enjoy what they can understand of it - luxury, a high standard of living, and easy work for high wages. Responsibility? Phoeey! What do they have a government for ...?" (21).

Poul Anderson has also made his commitment to classical liberal and libertarian views explicit and explored the endless struggle between irresponsibility and irrationalism and responsibility and rationalism. Thus he has declared:

"Collectivism, under whatever name, is as old as the neolithic god-kings; while it was a mere two centuries ago that Thomas Jefferson wrote of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' as being human rights ... I have an intellectual suspicion that the 18th century British-American idea of government by contract is so profoundly revolutionary that a thousand years would scarcely serve to exhaust its potentialities, and that it might conceivably move us onto an entire new level of social evolution." (22)

What are the social contexts most conducive to liberty, rationality and responsibility? Frontier conditions like the asteroid based society of **Tales of the Flying Mountains** seem to be one. But it takes "toil and grief" and the conscious practice of "keen and critical science" to both defend or extend "the unnatural state called civilization and freedom" against the "revolt of the primitive mind" (23). For Anderson there seems to be no foolproof guarantee for the preservation of civilization. The enlightened liberal social engineering of the Psychotechnic Institute in one series of "future history" stories, the mercantile civilization of the "Poleso-

technic League" stories - all social and institutional forms have their distinctive weaknesses and seeds of destruction. "Why has every free human society been so short-lived?", the question he asks in his short story **The Master Key**, thus remains the constant question throughout Anderson's work.

In recent years the work of the Russian-born American novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand has had a major influence on Science Fiction writers, as it has done on a growing number of philosophic and political thinkers. Rand has developed an extensive systematic neo-Aristotelian philosophy, attempting a radical defence of reason, science and individual liberty, which has been the principal impetus to the modern libertarian movement (24). Amongst the younger writers influenced by her work one should note F. Paul Wilson's "La Nague Federation" novels, **Healer** (1976) and **Wheels Within Wheels** (1978), L. Neil Smith's "North American Confederacy" novels, **The Probability Broach** (1980), **The Venus Belt** (1980), **Their Majesties Bucketees** (1981), and **The Nagasaki Vector** (1983), J. Neil Schulman's **Alongside Night** (1979), and **The Rainbow Cadenza** (1983), and David Houston's **Gods in a Vortex** (1977) and **Wing Master** (1981). The libertarian and rationalist ideas explored in such works are more vigorous, more optimistic and more militant in tone than most of the older writers (25).

### III: "Applied Science Fiction"

It is significant that most Science Fiction authors and critics have taken a strongly "activist" view on the role of the genre. "Science Fiction", as John J. Pierce has put it, "is not only speculating about the future, but helping to create it". In a period in which a large number of writers are stressing the alleged "limits of growth", and calling for the abandonment of reason, science, and the open society in favour of the allegedly more satisfying life of the "organic society", mysticism, and despotic tribal society (27), a large number of Science Fiction authors have explicitly joined battle against this "anti-industrial revolution".

In the UK, George Hay has been in the forefront of the advocacy of what he calls "applied science fiction", working through such organizations as The Environmental Consortium, The Science Fiction Foundation, and The Free Space Society as well as in literary exposition to encourage the recognition of the "illimitable New Frontier" of scientific research and space exploration:

"[In] a Ceasarist world such as ours, one increasingly falling under the influence of intellectual and political thugs, it is inevitable that increased responsibility must accrue to anybody insisting that futures exist or can be created ... The writer's role is precisely to dramatise the leading edge of his society's unuttered but potent thoughts. Science fiction writers did not cause man to reach the moon but they legitimised in the minds of millions of taxpayers the notion that it was desirable for them to do so." (28)

In America, this revolt for reason has gone much further and has become well organized. The monthly journal **Claustrophobia** (29) reports on the wide range of pro-technology, pro-science, life extension, pro-space research and space industrialization writings and projects. The L-5 society and the Sabre Foundation both promote and explore commercial development and exploration of space by governmental and free market initiatives (30). Many Science Fiction authors have involved themselves in the explicitly political activities of the Libertarian Party and the Libertarian Futurist Society (31).

Jerry Pournelle's work is a paradigm case of such applied Science Fiction. In such fictional works as **Lucifer's Hammer** (1977) and **Oath of Fealty** (1981), the central themes are the conflict between hysterical and coercive environmentalists and progressive technologists and scientists and the dramatization of the choice:

"[B]e good peasants, safe peasants, superstitious peasants - or



have worlds to conquer again. To control the lightning". (32)

Pournelle has written a number of non-fiction expositions of science and libertarianism, such as his **A Step Further Out** (1979). He has also been active within High Frontier, the campaign both to develop a space-based defensive system for the West, and to commercially explore and develop the resources of space (33).

#### **IV: The Choice for Humanity**

In their work **The Sociology of the Future** the American sociologists W. Bell and J. Man explicitly commented on the role of images of the future as determinants of the future (34). The historic role of Science Fiction is, in an age when forces of irrationalism, mysticism, and tyranny have never been so close to extinguishing the ideals of science, progress, and the open society, to hold aloft, to dramatize those ideals. When a large portion of the academic intelligentsia has embraced reactionary and anti-scientific values, Science Fiction still offers the vision that our establishment intelligentsia has so fatefully abandoned. Will it be the poetry of Science Fiction that becomes an unacknowledged legislator of the world, or will it be the siren songs of reactionary, tribal nostalgia?

As Ray Bradbury has put it:

"Challenge and response. Response and challenge. Toynbee's voice ghosts us down the years ahead. What do I hand you now, traveller? A suitcase stuffed with spirits to last beyond Alpha Centauri? Or a shovel for your grave? Choose one. Move or dig." (35)

## NOTES

1. **Jerusalem Post Magazine**, 30 September 1977, p.9.
2. Sam J. Lundwall, **Science Fiction: What It's All About**, Ace Books, New York, NY, 1971, p 24.
3. **The Strength to Dream**, Gollancz, London 1962, pp. 106-108. Science Fiction can be found as the short story, the novel, the poem, and even the song! It can dispense with many of the literary characteristics considered essential by 'mainstream' literature and critics. For example, characterization can be relegated to second place or no place at all - in stories in which the idea is 'hero'. Attempts to define Science Fiction in purely literary or aesthetic terms in hence rendered nugatory.
4. Peter Medawar, **The Hope of Progress**, Wildwood House, London, 1974, p. 117.
5. Colin Wilson, **The Age of Defeat**, Gollancz, London, 1959, pp. 17-19.
6. Henry A. Murray, "'In Nomine Diaboli'", in T. Hillway and L. S. Mansfield, eds., **Moby Dick: Centennial Essays**, Southern Methodist University Press, Dallas, Texas, 1953.
7. John Weightman, "The Concept of the Avant Garde", **Encounter**, July 1969, pp. 13-14.
8. For the most systematic philosophic critique of "serious" literature and its values, and a defence of what she terms "Romanticism" (an orientation to voluntarist and individualist metaphysical and moral values), see Ayn Rand, **The Romantic Manifesto: A Philosophy of Literature**, New American Library, New York, 1977.

For a detailed application of this perspective to science fiction see John J. Pierce, "Science Fiction and the Romantic Tradition", **Different**, 3(3), October 1968 and "The New Eschatology", **Renaissance**, 1(4), 1970. The latter has also been reprinted in **Foundation** (The Science Fiction Foundation), No. 1, March 1972. These two essays are perhaps the most important and penetrating ever written on the genre.

9. E. E. Smith, "The Epic of Space", in L. A. Eshbach, ed., **Of Worlds Beyond: The Science of Science Fiction Writing**, Dennis Dobson, London, 1965, p.92.
10. Jack Williamson, "The Logic of Fantasy", in **Ibid**, p 48. Science Fiction author Algis Budrys has also commented on the "spirit of rational nobility" to be found in adventure oriented Science Fiction. See John J. Pierce, "Science Fiction and the Romantic Tradition", **op cit**, p. 20.
11. In a review in **Analog**, February 1968, quoted in J. J. Pierce, **Ibid**, p. 21.
12. In his essay "The Science Fiction Novel", quoted in J. J. Pierce, **Ibid**, p. 24.
13. **Ibid**, p. 32.
14. Asimov, **op cit**, p. 32.
15. **Mind and Politics**, California University Press, Berkeley, 1972, p. 2.
16. See William J. Hyde, "The Socialism of H. G. Wells in the Early Twentieth Century", **Journal of the History of Ideas**, 17(2), April 1956.
17. See Karl Popper, **The Open Society and Its Enemies**, Routledge and Kegan Paul,

London, 1945, Vol. 2, pp. 227-228; F. A. Hayek, **The Counter-Revolution of Science**, The Free Press, New York, NY, 1955; Murray N. Rothbard, "The Mantle of Science", in H. Schoeck and J. W. Wiggins, eds., **Scientism and Values**, D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, New Jersey, 1960.

18. For a more detailed exploration of the epistemological and metaphysical roots of totalitarian doctrines of both "left" and "right", see Leonard Peikoff, **The Ominous Parallels: The End of Freedom in America**, New American Library, New York, 1984. In Peikoff's words: "When the power of reason is rejected, then, in social issues, the power of force takes its place. The epistemology of instinct is completed by the politics of brutality. Or, in philosophic terms: irrationalism generates statism", "Nazism versus Reason", **The Objectivist** (New York), October 1969, pp. 6-7.
19. **Glory Road**, New English Library, London, 1965.
20. **Stranger in a Strange Land**, New English Library, London 1965, p. 396.
21. From **Space Viking**, quoted in John H. Costello, "H. Beam Piper: An Infinity of Worlds", Pt. 3, **Renaissance**, 5(2), p. 1.
22. Poul Anderson, "Freedom and Science Fiction", **New Libertarian**, 4(3), May 1978, p. 12; Idem, "The Profession of Science Fiction", **Foundation**, No. 5, January 1974, p. 49.
23. Poul Anderson, **UN Man and Other Novellas**, Dennis Dobson, London, 1972, p. 97.
24. Rand's ideas can be found in such non-fiction works as: **For the New**

**Intellectual**, New American Library, New York, 1963; **The Virtue of Selfishness**, New American Library, New York, 1964; **Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal**, New American Library, New York, 1967; **The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution**, New American Library, New York, 1971; **The Romantic Manifesto**, New American Library, NY, 1977 and in such novels as: **Atlas Shrugged**, New American Library, New York, 1960; **Anthem**, New American Library, New York, 1973; **The Fountainhead**, New American Library, New York, 1960. Critical discussions can be found in Douglas J. Den Uyl and Douglas B. Rasmussen, eds., **The Philosophical Thought of Ayn Rand**, University of Illinois Press, 1984; Robert Nozick "On the Randian Argument" and D. Den Uyl and D. Rasmussen, "Nozick on the Randian Argument" in Jeffrey Paul, ed., **Reading Nozick: Essays on 'Anarchy, State and Utopia'**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, UK, 1981, and the forthcoming biography **The Passion of Ayn Rand** by Barbara Branden.

25. In the space available I have only been able to touch upon the evidence for my thesis as to the ideological character of Science Fiction. There are also, of course, exceptions to this dominant temper. Frederick Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth, both jointly and individually, wrote a number of works in the 1950s directly based on anti-capitalist premises. Clifford Simak's novel **A Choice of Gods** (1973) is explicitly "organicist" and anti-individualist, attacking the "fatal disease" of property, profit and the conquest of nature. The short-lived "New Wave" school of science fiction of the late 1960s and early 1970s was also consciously conceived as an attack on "traditional" Science Fiction. It attacked "naive rationalism" (Judith Merrill) and "reactionary mechaporn" (Michael Moorcock) in favour of avowed mysticism, wallowed in the alleged "universal miseries" (Willis E. McNally) of life, and called for the "retribalization" (McNally) of humanity. The novels of J. G. Ballard were paradigmatic of this approach. They featured

"dissolving heroes" who, in the face of mysterious natural disasters, do not fight, but seek, literally, "absorption" and extinction. In **The Wind from Nowhere**, for example, we find a quite explicit statement that "man has no right to assert his innate superiority over the unreason of the natural world". This "New Wave" receded remarkably quickly in the UK, however, in spite of the infusion of Arts Council subsidies, and is now largely limited to a small coterie of critics.

26. "The New Eschatology", **op cit**, p. 3.
27. See, for example, out of a huge literature, Robert Heilbroner, **The Human Prospect**, W.W. Norton, New York, 1974; William Irwin Thompson, **Darkness and Scattered Light**, Doubleday, New York, 1979; Theodore Roszak, **The Making of a Counter Culture**, Faber, London, 1970.
28. George Hay, "For The Record: What the Science Fiction Ought to be About", **Foundation**, No. 5, January 1974, pp. 63-66; Idem, "A Science of Fiction", **Foundation**, No. 3, March 1973, p 42; and see also his "Science Fiction: Thinking or Dreaming?", **Ad Astra**, 1(4), April 1979; "What Then, Comrades, Should Be Done?", **Arena**, No. 5, 1977; Idem, "Space Colonies: Our Tomorrow, A Symposium on Mankind's Future", Faculty of Environmental Studies, North East London Polytechnic, 11 March 1976; "Applied Science Fiction", address to the Libertarian Alliance, London House, 30 October, 1984.
29. Claustrophobia: 5047 SW 26th Drive, Portland, Oregon 97201, USA.
30. The L-5 Society, 1620 North Park Avenue, Tucson, Arizona 85719, USA.  
The Sabre Foundation, 325 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20003, USA.  
See also the papers delivered to the 1979 meeting of the American

Astronomical Society: Robert Poole "Free Space", J. Peter Valk,  
"No More Doomsday", G. Hudson and P. K. Chapinan, "Gateway to  
Space", published in **Reason**, April 1979, 10(12) and  
Michael Gilson, "Man and the Stars: A Libertarian Proposal  
to Get There", **New Libertarian**, Nos. 5-6, January 1980.

31. The Libertarian Party: 21715 Park Brook Drive, Katy, Texas 77450, USA;  
The Libertarian Futurist Society: 121 McKinley Street, Rochester, New  
York 14609, USA.

32. Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, **Lucifer's Hammer**, Futura Books,  
London, 1978, p. 835. Another major work in this contemporary school  
of militantly progressive Science Fiction is G. C. Edmondson's  
**The Man Who Corrupted Earth**, Ace/Grosset and Dunlop, New York,  
1980. This novel portrays a last-ditch - and successful - struggle  
of private entrepreneurs to expand into space against the coercive  
opposition of state privileged corporations, fanatical anti-science  
environmentalists, and "the total amorality of government", p. 280.

As Edmondson states: "The only ones who complain about Western  
technology are Westerners ... every Third Worlder carries a ballpoint  
and a transistor while he struggles to climb from moped to limousine  
... The old guard can still hurt us. We won't be safe until we have  
factories and farms off planet", p. 267.

33. High Frontier, 1010 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suit 1000, Washington, DC 20005, USA.

34. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, NY, 1971.

35. Ray Bradbury, "From Stonehenge to Tranquillity Base", **Playboy**,  
December 1972, p. 324.

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**Textual Note:** Some minor typographical and grammatical errors have been corrected.



## 14: ERNEST HEMINGWAY AND THE FAILURE OF NIHILISM

" ... au fond des querel les litteraires, il y a toujours une question philosophique." Emile Zola (1)

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### Contents:

- I: Disillusionment
- II: Social Commitment
- III: Technique and Sense of Life
- IV: A Failure of Thought
- V: Values and Literary Achievement

Notes

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Since virtually everything that **can** be said about Ernest Hemingway **has** been said, any further exercise in the analysis of his work really ought to offer some self-justification. While not claiming to voice any startlingly original insights into the work of the writer, I do hope to demonstrate the value - and validity - of that theory of art enunciated by Ayn Rand (2). Rand defines art as a "selective re-creation of reality according to an artist's metaphysical value-judgments" (3). Those metaphysical value judgments can range from sophisticated, systematic and intellectual to crude, haphazard and unconscious, but they always manifest themselves in an artist's "sense of life", as she calls it. She continues:

"The truth or falsehood of a given artist's philosophy as such, is not an aesthetic matter; it may affect a given viewer's enjoyment of his work, but it does not negate its aesthetic merit. Some sort of philosophic meaning, however, some **implicit** view of life, is a necessary element of a work of life ... The fact that one agrees or disagrees with an artist's philosophy is irrelevant to an **aesthetic** appraisal of his work **qua** art. One does not have to agree with an artist (nor even to enjoy him) in order to evaluate his work. In essence, an objective evaluation requires that one identify the artist's theme, the abstract meaning of his work ... then evaluate the means by which he conveys it - ie by taking **his** theme as criterion, evaluate the technical mastery (or lack of it) with which he projects (or fails to project) **his** view of life". (4)

However, we can go further, it seems to me. We can also examine the impact of an author's specific sense of life upon the boundaries of artistic achievement open to him. For in my view Hemingway's work constitutes a particularly graphic demonstration of the consequences, in this case detrimental, of an author's fundamental view of himself and of existence.

## **I: Disillusionment**

The dominant tone of Hemingway's work was undoubtedly a sense of the bankruptcy of values, a quasi-nihilistic despair of finding any meaning or value in a "universe of chance". It reflected in part the widespread disillusionment affecting so many intellectuals after World War I. Thus, in his illuminating study of the literary and intellectual world of the 1920's, Frederick Jay Hoffman chose as his illustrative text for the section on "The War and the Postwar Temper" Hemingway's **The Sun Also Rises** (5). This disillusionment was perhaps summed up best, however, by the statement of the protagonist of **A Farewell to Arms**, Frederic Henry:

"I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain ... There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of places were all you could say and have their mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of regiments and the dates".

The sense of a meaningless, uncaring - if not positively malevolent - universe was likewise conveyed in Frederic's musings on how he had once burnt a log full of ants and observed, like an unmoved God, their frantic efforts to escape. Man too, we are supposed to think, is ultimately doomed to the same sort of meaningless death as the ants. "You always feel trapped biologically", says Frederic to his lover Catherine. And to underline the point Catherine herself dies in an equally gratuitous manner, another biological accident - the result of childbirth and the fact of her narrow hips. "If people bring so much courage to this world," reflects Frederic, "the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure that it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry".

I termed Hemingway's sense of life **quasi-nihilistic**, for there is some vague concept of metaphysical value present. Sometimes, value is attributed to the realm of Nature - the wind rippling the corn field appears in almost everything he wrote as an image of life, of harmony, peace, and permanence. The existence of the peasantry, living in harmony with their surroundings also appears to have some metaphysical value attributed to it. And, of course, there is the famous Hemingway "code", the ethos of the "stiff upper lip" as exemplified most notably in the protagonists of **The Sun Also Rises**, those psychically or physically scarred individuals such as Jake Barnes, Bill Gorton, Count Mippipopolous, and Lady Brett.

If the world is unmistakably one of meaningless suffering and death, then one can - in the Hemingway worldview - at least maintain in the face of it a certain self-control and detachment. Like the matador's consummate skill and grace while confronting painful death it is, in Hemingway's view, this maintenance of dignity and self-control which constitutes the most and the best man can hope for.

## II: Social Commitment

Hemingway did, of course, make forays into what some critics, usually those of marked socialist leanings, have seen and praised as "social commitment". Thus, although the ending of **To Have and Have Not** is still largely pessimistic, many have seen in it and in the last words of its dying, "rugged individualist" hero, a recognition of the necessity of social action to rectify the injustices of the corrupt **status quo**. "A man ... One man alone ain't got. No man alone now ... No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody ... chance". And in **For Whom the Bell Tolls** critics have also seen an abandonment of what they term Hemingway's customary "philosophy of atomistic individualism and irresponsibility" (6). Rather than declaring a "separate peace" as did Frederic Henry in **A Farewell to Arms**, Robert Jordan confronted and accepted the issues of duty and sacrifice in spite of the surrounding social disintegration. Jordan comes to Spain as soon as the Civil War breaks out, and had, as he put it himself, "fought that summer and that fall for all the poor in the world, against all the tyranny, for all the things that you believed and for the new world you had been educated into". Yet Jordan becomes profoundly aware of the deceit and treachery and courage existing on both sides, of Communist duplicity, and of the fact that **his** values, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity ... Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" were hardly those of his allies. On the mission which ends in his death Jordan is well aware not merely of its danger, but of the fact that it was probably both insignificant in the long run and doomed to failure. However, he proceeds with his task, even when aware of his betrayal. For many critics this has been interpreted as the final message of the novel, the

assertion of the value of idealistic commitment in the face of defeat and despair. Yet it is easy to overlook a profoundly pessimistic point, Jordan's observation that "[if] this war is lost all of these things [ie., Liberty, Equality etc.] are lost". The novel was written **after** the Civil War, and the war **had** been lost. At most, **For Whom the Bell Tolls** can stand as a testament in support of commitment in the future. Hemingway wrote it at the start of the Second World War and it may well be a plea for commitment as a value in and for itself, with the bleak warning that the struggle could be fruitless.

### **III: Technique and Sense of Life**

Simply delineating an author's sense of life and fundamental philosophy does, of course, constitute only the beginning of the critical task. For the realm of literary criticism, of objective aesthetic appraisal, it is necessary to describe and evaluate the **means** by which an author conveys his theme. In the words of Ayn Rand, taking the author's theme as criterion one must "evaluate the purely aesthetic elements of the work, the technical mastery (or lack of it) with which he projects (or fails to project) his view of life" (7). However, the nature of an author's sense of life remains a fundamentally important issue, not only in determining one's personal, emotional response to his work, but in determining the degree of his objective and **general** literary achievement. My analysis of the achievement and failure of Ernest Hemingway will demonstrate, I hope, exactly why this should be so.

In evaluating Hemingway as a writer Lionel Trilling has indicated one fruitful line of approach. In his essay "Contemporary American Literature In Its Relation To Ideas" (8) Trilling has commented on the curious failing of so many American novelists, a failure of **intelligence**, of the intellectual grasp of problems. Regarding Hemingway, Trilling perceived "a deficiency of conscious mind, an inadequacy of the talent of disquisition".

Maxwell Geismer, in **Writers and Crisis**, also partially formulated this point when he

commented specifically on Hemingway's intellectual failure in **For Whom the Bell Tolls**. The latter he judged far inferior to similar European novels like Malraux's **Man's Fate**, Silone's **Bread and Wine**, and Koestler's **Darkness at Noon**. These works were, in Geismer's view, "filled with penetrating insights in the patterns of social crisis, the gains and losses worked by such crises upon the human temperament ..." (9). Indeed, in contrast Hemingway's intellectual stature **does** appear strikingly less than that of his European contemporaries. There is simply no adequate exploration throughout his work of the issues with which he is fundamentally concerned, no analysis of the personal crises of his characters or of the crisis of values which he, and so many of his contemporaries felt. Rather, all we find is a suffocating atmosphere of self-pity, and, alternatively, emotional repression. Can the sort of internal monologue delivered by Frederic Henry in **A Farewell to Arms**, which we have already quoted, seriously be considered as anything other than immature, self-pitying, and essentially vacuous? I for one can understand the exasperation which drove Wyndham Lewis to his withering denunciation of the Hemingway "hero" as a "dullwitted, bovine, monosyllabic simpleton, [a] lethargic and stuttering dummy", and of most of his characters as "puppets ... leaves, very violently blown hither and thither, drugged or at least deeply intoxicated phantoms of a sort of matter-of-fact shell shock" (10).

Hemingway's own partial solution to the dilemmas of the "Lost Generation", the "Hemingway code", can hardly be considered a substitute for serious thought. The "stiff upper-lip" ethos imprisoned him within walls of his own making. He became in his own life as well as his art an incarnation of the myth of hairy-chested masculinity - to the point of self-parody. The self-conscious masculinity of Colonel Cantwell in **Across the River And Into the Trees** was the quite logical conclusion of the path that he, Hemingway, had taken. The shallowness of thought in Hemingway, the typically immature confusion of masculine sexual normality with virtue, is apparent throughout all of his work. Just how seriously can one take an author who, in a supposedly "socially conscious" novel like **To Have and Have Not**, presents his wealthy and "bad" characters as universally alcoholics, homosexuals, drug addicts, or masturbators. All are in some way or another impotent, perverted, or frustrated.

Needless to say, the ruggedly masculine hero, Harry Morgan, is apparently the only one who can provide a good lay.

#### IV: A Failure of Thought

Writing in *Men at War* of his love of *War and Peace* Hemingway criticised Tolstoy's "ponderous and Messianic thinking" and stated that he "learned from him to distrust my Thinking with a capital 'T'...". It was tragic that Hemingway came to this conclusion, for it was precisely some deeper thinking that his work needed. Hemingway, and the Hemingway code, manifest one of the worst forms of anti-intellectualism - that of the intellectual. "I was not made to think," declared Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*, "I was made to eat. My God, yes. Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine". It was hardly insignificant that Helen Gordon - of *To Have and Have Hot* - in her outburst against her husband, accuses him of having got his "dirty little tricks" out of books, or that she ends with the most abusive term she, or presumably the author, could think of - "You writer!". It was Hemingway's anti-intellectualism, his distrust of the very role and responsibilities of the intellectual, that makes his work so fundamentally unsatisfying and which prevented him from creating a truly great art.

#### V: Values and Literary Achievement

But if the limitation of intellectual horizons, the deeply felt distrust of the intellect, partly explains Hemingway's failure, can we not also trace that failure to something more fundamental, to the author's own "sense of life"? I think we can. Our basic question must be, how far can nihilism provide an adequate foundation for **sustained** artistic endeavour?

The answer is surely that it cannot. As D.S. Savage has pointed out:

"[N]ihilism precludes the possibility of organic and interesting development. The Hemingway world is one of mechanical repetition, and in the series of Hemingway's nine or ten books there is no inward continuity to keep pace with the chronological sequence". (11).

To put it crudely - to have read one Hemingway novel is virtually to have read them all! Hemingway created a distinctive protagonist and taciturn style which embodied his sensibility undeniably well. In this lay an undoubted literary achievement. But it was an extremely limited one. Unable or unwilling to explore the issues with which he was concerned, he also failed to develop a broader, more fertile vision of life which alone could lead to sustained literary creativity. He thus said all he had to say, and did very much all he could do, in his first few stories and novels. The rest are repetitive in theme, derivative in style, and all thoroughly superfluous.

Robert Penn Warren, writing in the **Kenyon Review**, has defended Hemingway on the grounds that he "is essentially a lyric rather than a dramatic writer, and for the lyric writer virtue depends upon the intensity with which the personal vision is rendered rather than upon the creation of a variety of characters whose visions are in conflict among themselves" (12).

Such an argument does contain an element of truth. The Hemingway "hero" remains essentially the same throughout the novels and most of the short stories. Jack Barnes, Frederic Henry, Robert Jordan, Nick Adams - all are cut from the same cloth. Few of the minor characters (with the possible exception of those in **For Whom The Bell Tolls**) ever take on much of the substance of real life. It is the brooding Hemingway sensibility which dominates each work. Likewise, the "Hemingway landscape", from "Hills Like White Elephants", through **The Sun Also Rises** to **Across the River and Into the Trees** remains very much the same, the mirror of the protagonist's own psychological state. Richard K. Petersen, in a perceptive study of Hemingway's style, has also pointed to the recurrence throughout his work of the imagery of the "cool, clean, light and well-ordered", of objective



terms rendered evaluative. The constant repetition of the "cool and clean" in **A Farewell To Arms** is especially striking: the "cool and clean" taste of the martinis in the hotel bar at Stresa, the "cold and clean" air coming through the window of Frederic Henry's room at Guttingens, the railroad gondola car loaded with guns and smelling "cleanly of oil and grease", and even the "clean smell of dried dung" in the barn in which Frederic and his companions hide during the retreat.

Yet once we have identified the key Hemingwayesque images and motifs we know what to expect in each successive story. Hemingway's artistic resources - his technique as a writer - are simply not rich enough to sustain indefinite interest. In that mania of modern criticism, hunting the symbol, some critics, of whom Carlos Baker is the most notable, have attributed a "controlling symbolism" to Hemingway's work. Baker has perceived, for example, certain "elemental images" of the Mountain - "life and the home" - and the Plain - "war and death" (13). But if there is some general substance to such an interpretation, Baker's case rests upon a misreading of the opening paragraph of **A Farewell to Arms**. As E. M. Haliday has pointed out (14), Baker is simply mistaken as to the positioning of mountain and plain, a fact which demolishes his case for a **controlling** symbolism. However, even conceding a more general, less strict, validity to Baker's view of Hemingway's symbolism, might it not be better termed a controlling **cliche**? Hemingway's symbolism of purity and escape can hardly be considered either especially original or illuminating. Similarly, his attempt in **The Old Man and The Sea** to create a more allegorical dramatization of his theme of "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" is marred by a crude, and most culpable, unilluminating, Christian symbolism. We are thus shown the old man struggling up the hill with his mast, staggering and falling, stretched out beneath its weight, or sleeping with his arms outstretched, as if on a cross, with his hands marked by the stigmata of his battle with the marlin.

Hemingway's work must be judged, in my view, as a failure. The failure was undoubtedly an intellectual one. But more fundamental, surely, was the "question philosophique".

Hemingway's failure to create truly great art can ultimately be traced to his sense of life. **It was a failure of nihilism.** For, as Nietzsche once observed:

"[W]hat does all art do? Does it not praise? Does it not glorify?  
Does it not select? Does it not bring things into prominence?  
In all this it strengthens or weakens certain valuations.  
Is this only a secondary matter? An accident? Something  
in which the artist's instinct has no share? **Or is this not rather  
the very prerequisite which enables the artist to accomplish something?"** (15).

#### NOTES

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3. **Ibid**, p. 19.
4. **Ibid**, pp. 39, 42
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7. Rand, **op cit**, p. 42.
8. **American Quarterly**, 1(3), Fall 1949; reprinted in **The Liberal Tradition**, Mercury Books, New York, 1964.
9. Quoted in McCaffery, **op cit**, p. 183.
10. In **Men Without Art** (1934), Russell and Russell, New York, 1964; this passage reprinted in J. Gallens, ed., **Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'A Farewell to Arms'**, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1970, pp. 81, 75-76.
11. **The Withered Branch**, Eyre and Spottiswood, London, 1950.
12. "Hemingway", **The Kenyon Review**, Vol. 9, Winter 1947, p. 28.
13. Carlos Baker, **Hemingway: The Writer as Artist**, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 3rd edn, 1963.
14. "Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony", **American Literature**, Vol. 27, 1956.
15. **The Twilight of the Idols**, in Geoffrey Clive, ed., **The Philosophy of Nietzsche**, New American Library, New York, 1965, p. 542, emphasis mine.

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## APPENDIX: DETAILS OF ORIGINAL PLACES OF PUBLICATION

1. "Creating a Science of Liberty: The Life and Heritage of Murray N. Rothbard, 1926-1995", **Free Life: A Journal of Classical Liberal and Libertarian Thought**, No. 23, August 1995, pp. 7-8. (1739 words)
2. "The Revolution of Reason: Professor Gay, the Enlightenment, and the Ambiguities of Classical Liberalism", **Journal of Libertarian Studies** (Pergamon Press, New York), Vol. 1, No. 3, Summer 1977, pp. 217-227. Also reprinted under the same title as *Libertarian Heritage* No. 7, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1992, ISBN: 1-85637-112-3. (8069 words)
3. "J. M. Robertson: The Critical Liberal", in G. H. Wells, ed., **John Mackinnon Robertson, Liberal, Rationalist, Scholar, 1856-1933**, Pemberton Books, London, 1987, pp. 93-122. ISBN: 0-301-87001. (12,936 words)
4. "The New Enlightenment", in Arthur Seldon, ed., **The 'New Right' Enlightenment**, Economic and Literary Books, Sevenoaks, Kent, 1985, pp. 237-249, 252-261. ISBN: 0-948115-01-7. (8700 words)
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**ENDS**