

grounds and interests. It was also, Ajami notes, "this chameleonlike quality in him that made his critics doubt his sincerity."

Preaching the compatibility of Islam with reason, science, and social justice, Musa al Sadr found followers among Sunni Muslims and Maronite Christians as well as among his own Shia constituency. In a faction-ridden Lebanon, with an increasingly weak central government and a growing number of Palestinian refugees, Musa al Sadr not only bolstered the pride and confidence of his fellow Shia but offered to other groups the hope of compromise and cooperation. His role was not without its contradictions, however: The cleric who fasted for the cause of peace in 1975 was also responsible for organizing the nucleus of the Shia militia, Amal, in the same year.

A man of such influence in a volatile land inevitably made enemies; many Palestinians and Arab leftists despised him. In August 1978, while on a trip to Libya, the imam mysteriously vanished. A cry went up among Musa al Sadr's supporters, but Libya's President Muammar al-Qaddafi declared himself innocent of foul play.

Ajami's book merits the label *tour de force*. Depicting the life of an unusual man, it illuminates the larger tragedy of a region where hope for peaceful solutions to old and vexing problems grows weaker every day.

**BEYOND ENTITLEMENT:
The Social Obligations
of Citizenship**

by Lawrence M. Mead
Free Press, 1986
318 pp. \$19.95

Just about every side lately has had its say in the revived U.S. debate over the causes and aggravations of poverty, from New York Democrat Daniel Moynihan to conservative Thomas Sowell to socialist Michael Harrington. Mead, a New York University professor of politics, thinks that all sides have missed the central issue, or at least given it short shrift: "The main problem with the welfare state is its permissiveness not its size." Mead argues that government should require the poor to *earn* their benefits by fulfilling certain fundamental obligations of citizenship. These include a demonstrable effort to hold a job, to finish school, to obey the law.

So sensible is Mead's proposal that by far the more interesting part of his book is his discussion of the philosophical and practical barriers to its adoption. America's tradition of "Lockean" liberal-

ism, with its aversion to any form of governmental coercion of individuals, presents one such obstacle. And the long-established political practice of interest group brokering has seen to it that government "does not make demands on people; they make demands on it."

Formidable obstacles. But given the current shortage of "self-evident" truths, it would be a pity if Mead's ideas were ignored.

Arts & Letters

**ARCTIC DREAMS:
Imagination and Desire
in a Northern Landscape**
by Barry Lopez
Scribner's, 1986
464 pp. \$22.95

The 16th-century navigator Jacques Cartier described the Arctic as "the land God gave to Cain." Lopez, author of the highly acclaimed *Of Wolves and Men* (1979), has far kinder words for the region. Having spent four years there with scientific researchers and Eskimos, he understands its attraction for both.

Braving an environment in which 32 degrees Fahrenheit is considered warm and a "night" lasts months, Eskimos speak a language that changes radically with the seasons. Thus, says Lopez, "terms for the many varieties of snow emerge in winter, while those for whaling come into use in the spring." (Indeed, the Inuktitut language is so closely tied to experience that, as religious rituals, hunting practices, and other old ways die, young Eskimos no longer understand large chunks of their elders' speech.)

The polar bear is another hardy resident of long standing, and scientists have learned a great deal about its survival skills. Although its thick white hair loses 90 percent of its insulating power when wet (a far worse performance than, say, the beaver's), scientists have found that its exterior "guard hairs" are hollow and conduct the sun's heat to the bear's black skin.

Above all, Lopez's book evokes the terrible beauty of the frigid north. The aurora borealis, solar and lunar rings, halos, coronas, and a variety of mirages give the Arctic heavens a chimerical aspect. So convincing, for instance, are the fata morgana—mirages resembling extensive mountain ranges or urban skylines—that seasoned explorers in earlier centuries "set down mountains and islands on their charts where there was nothing but empty sky."