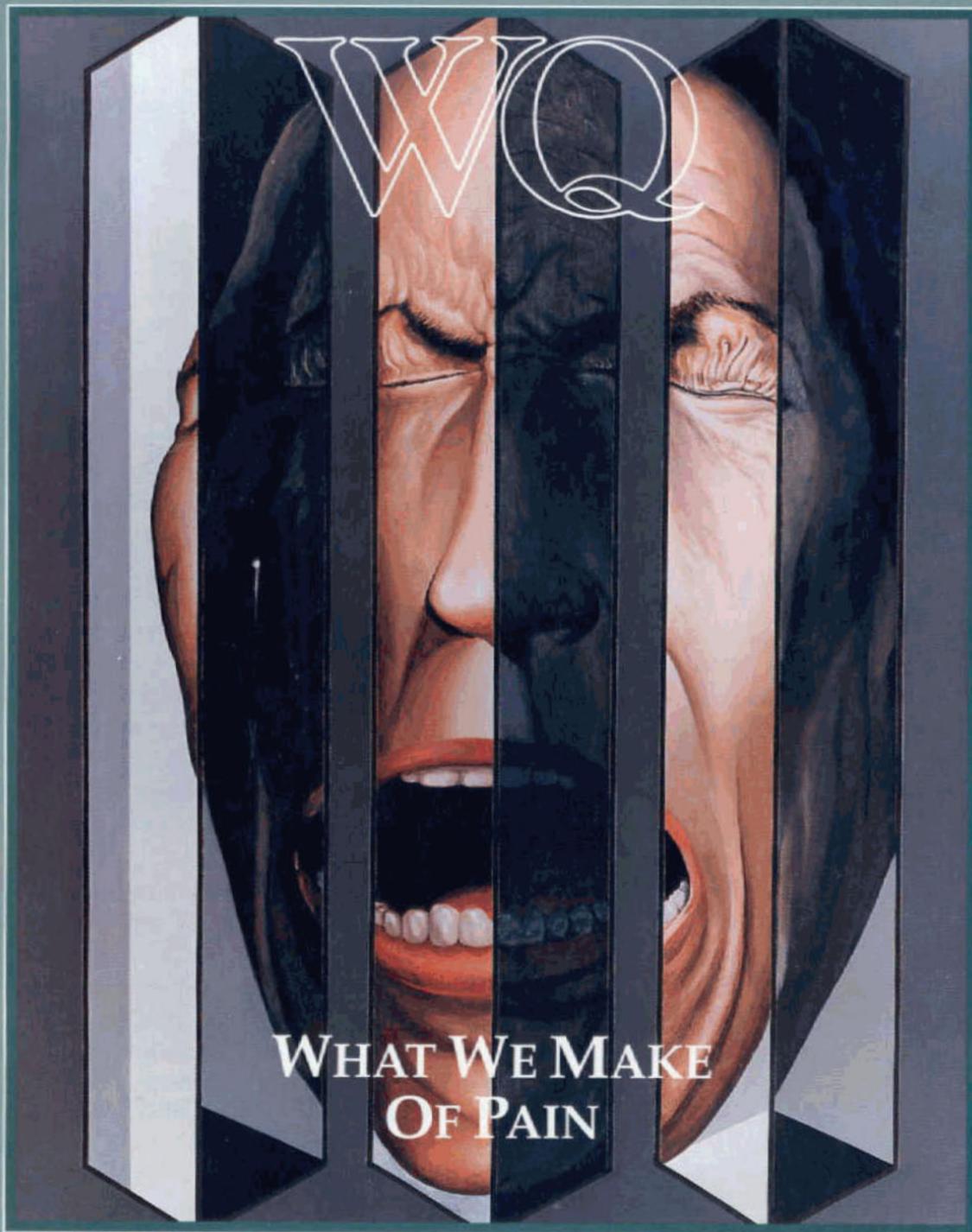


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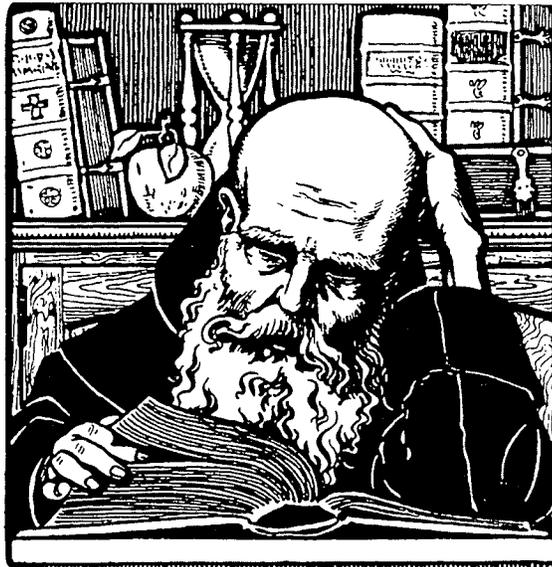


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Cover: *Anguish* (1989), by George Dergalis. From the Headache Art Exhibition—"Through the Looking Glass"—sponsored by Sandoz Pharmaceuticals Corporation.

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## EDITOR'S COMMENT

The baseball strike continues. Not only will there be no World Series (for the first time since 1904) but a string of would-be record breakers will have to postpone their efforts to next year. The nation will survive, no doubt, as it has before, when strikes and other interruptions have denied it its "national pastime." But there is particular poignance in the major league's absence during the same autumn that PBS airs Ken Burns's documentary of the game. This invaluable historian of the image, who has done more than any other living historian to animate Americans' curiosity about their past, reminds us in his newest work that games are one of the truer mirrors of a nation, a culture, a people. Baseball in its many aspects mirrors the American character with astonishing fidelity: in its individualism (so far resistant to the Cult of the Coach, which has ruined football), in its capacity for spontaneity and even limited anarchy within a structured form, in its magical blend of lazy insouciance and artfully channeled exertion, in its boundless obsession with averages, records, and other statistical desiderata, and, finally, in its stubborn, workmanly beauty. Just as faithfully, the game's history mirrors many of those struggles within the republic's history that have pitted our "better angels" against our worst, notably the saga of race and integration. In short, baseball is us. And the great consolation of Burns's work in this partially benighted autumn is its power to evoke the resilience of the game. This is not the first time greedy mortals have tried to ruin it; nor will it be the last. But the game endures because the archetype is so good, so seemingly a gift of the gods. Such endurance, to those looking for signs of hope, is almost proof that the ideal can prevail over mere matter.

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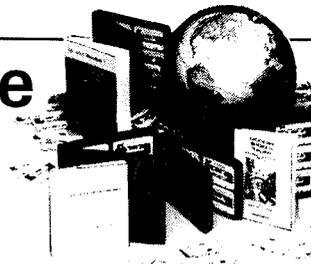


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## AT ISSUE

### *The Breaks*

**B**ody-snatching space pods—they resemble squash with a thyroid condition and hormonal imbalance—first invaded the earth in the mid-1950s, so we're coming up on a 40th anniversary. Fall asleep near one of them, and the malevolent pod will suck the life out of you, *become* you, assume your appearance, erase your humanity, and leave your former body an empty husk. The vegetables have settled in nicely, and their presence explains a lot: the capacity of politicians to keep smiling; the diction of the flight attendants who read survival instructions to you before takeoff; the demeanor of TV newscasters who respond the same way to war, the weather, a new movie, school murders, a lost cat, space travel, sports highlights, and the disappearance of shame from society.

I sometimes wonder whether some podlike process is not at work in the larger culture as well, allowing familiar forms to remain but replacing their old animating spirit with something new and alien, as if there had been a break in the chromosome that carried the traditional cultural characteristics. Evidence is abundant but ambiguous, and the temptation is to read for homicide, though the offense may be no more serious than double-parking.

Not many minutes into the television adaptation of Stephen King's *The Stand* that was broadcast this past spring (all spring, it seemed), folks began to go face down into their mashed potatoes. These were cast members for the most part, not viewers, and they were afflicted by a deadly virus that moved a whole lot faster than the show and threatened the end of the world as we know it. A few Camille-like coughs, a little light-headedness, and *wham*, you were on the ground posed artfully against a post, and deader than the wood. As ends of the world go, this one was certainly cheaper to stage than some hot apocalypse, but it was not entirely convincing. They never even showed the virus, unless it appeared

during one of my trips to the refrigerator.

Toward the close of the first episode, a high-ranking military man who held himself responsible for unleashing the pesky bug was moved to recite poetry (a sure sign that death was near). He managed several lines from Yeats's "The Second Coming," just the ones you'd expect under the circumstances ("Things fall apart," etc.) for those who were missing the point of doomsday. And then he told his young associate and the millions of viewers who were his audience that "a man named Yeets wrote those lines." This was by far the most interesting thing that had happened all evening. But was I dozing and had I misheard? No, he was named again, several moments later, this same dour, prophetic "Yeets" fellow. Good lord, I thought, it really is the end of the world, and not with a bang or a bug but a vowel shift.

**WQ**

The most obvious, and chilling, explanation was that neither the actor nor the director nor any one of the many other people making art happen on the set of *The Stand* knew enough to propose going with the traditional "Yates"—just for the heck of it. Or perhaps some did know, and didn't care: It's only television, for goodness' sake, and there won't be a final exam. My stubborn and relentlessly tested faith in the intelligence of those who have undertaken responsibility for the nation's common cultural life invented an explanation of last resort: "Yeets" was actually a subtle bit of characterization, to suggest that the military man was untutored and had only a rough and self-acquired bookish learning; visual, you see, not aural. Alas, the umpteen other hours of *The Stand* stood (but mostly slumped, slouched, and went supine) foursquare against subtlety.

To fret over a matter so slight, to assign it any significance, is probably less high-minded than high-horsed. Give these folks credit—or maybe half-credit—for the attempt, for keeping the cultural shell, even if the shell and the gesture were empty. Charity says ignore the

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lapse; constructive derision may keep it from happening again. The film was expensive and wildly popular and wanted to be loved for its ambition (and even, heaven help us, for its theology). It was selling boutique horror, not dime store fright, and at those prices we deserve the tradition in its own body.

"People don't read anymore." Another tradition interred. You hear it said all the time, but what does it mean? On public transportation in Washington, D.C., most riders who have any distance to travel appear to be traveling with books (as they did in New York City, my previous public laboratory). The few bookstores in downtown Washington are crowded enough at lunchtime that the air in the aisles is often sweet with "excuse me's" and "pardons." More airports have bookstores, not merely bookshelves. Terrible movies, which leave you so stricken you lose the will to leave at the end and so are forced to endure the crawl of the terminal credits and learn the names of the leading lady's personal trainer, butcher, and gynecologist, announce finally that they have been made into books and invite the audience to experience them all over again in their altered state. Literate masochists take note.

So the evidence of the senses contradicts the notion that no one reads, as do sales figures for the titles that capture a place on best-seller lists; a small number of titles sell a large number of books. But you suspect the pods have done their worst when you look over people's shoulders at *what* they're reading—counterfeit romances, wan and unedited techno-thrillers, distended biographies in desperate need of a purge, cloudy political gossip, and manuals of every description (*You and Your Aura*, *Eat and Compete*, *The Compleat Gender Bender*, *Living with Liposuction*, *Fast Food/Slow Death*, *Men Run Companies/Women Run Errands*). For printed materials of this sort—"books" sticks in the throat—there is an insatiable audience, indifferent to aesthetics, in thrall not to truth but to information, hell-bent on turning the straw of their self-doubt into the common coin of dudgeon.

I concede the occasional Bible in the hands of those past fashion, and the traditional title that absorbs the dutiful student. But the audience for serious fiction, for literature, has

diminished, as has the inclination of publishers to print it. I am speaking of work that sorts out the confusion and complexity of our human state and conveys, however fleetingly, a true impression of what is essential to being human. Saul Bellow has been an eloquent advocate, as in the Nobel Prize lecture he gave in December 1976: "The value of literature lies in these intermittent 'true impressions.' A novel moves back and forth between the world of objects, of actions, of appearances, and that other world, from which these 'true impressions' come and which moves us to believe that the good we hang on to so tenaciously, in the face of evil, so obstinately—is no illusion."

Serious fiction has a distinctive style and manner and shape, such that you risk being caught up short while reading a sentence or paragraph and moved to read it again, perhaps aloud; to hear the words in the order the author has placed them and to take pleasure in the aptness of the disposition. No manual works this magic.

**N**ot everything needs to be *The Golden Bowl*, and there is a long tradition of respectable popular fiction that doesn't pretend to greatness but is still worth protecting from the sudden summer shower at the beach. In the past, what was popular often coincided with what was meritorious. Bellow's *Herzog*, for example, sat atop best-seller lists for months, which now seems inconceivable. (I have not forgotten that a seagull once perched month after month in the same spot and made life miserable for everyone below him. He should sit forever on a bridge in Madison County.) Marquand, O'Hara, Porter, Cheever, Updike, Mailer, Welty, Percy, and others did all right, too.

Despite the occasional eccentric success of a Cormac McCarthy or an E. Annie Proulx, the fiction that sells today, and that people in great numbers read, is to literature as Fido to White Fang. Of course serious fiction is still published, but it matters to relatively few. Those who continue to write it, against the dicey prospect of critical success and financial reward (by which one no longer means sales in the tens of thousands and a movie option, but simply the rent

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money), deserve laurel for their resolve.

You want the human condition? Open your eyes and face the day, and the traffic, and the endless news reports and updates and bulletins, the view from weather satellites, the warnings from those who urge you to watch your wallet and your back, your figure, and your self-esteem. Scan your *People*. Turn on Court TV or *Cops*. This is life mainlined, reality in a rush, even for the inattentive. How can reading compete? It is freeze-frame, the details held steady for review and explanation, in a fast-forward age that barely has time for the gist.

I suppose we should be grateful when a cultural link one assumed forever broken is unexpectedly repaired, even if with KrazyGlue. Such is the case with the newfound popularity of Gregorian chant—plainsong—an art evolved by the papal choir some 14 centuries ago. In exchange for our cultural tokens—burgers and terminators and Madonna—Europe has once again sent monks, not to give us one last shot at civilization but to allow commerce one more shot at us.

Gregorian chant is not new to recorded music. The Benedictines of Solesmes Abbey in France, for example, have been recording for many years, and the irresistible Frenchness of their Latin vowels helps explain Caesar's passion for Gaul. But it was their brother Benedictines, from the abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos in northern Spain, whose recordings of Gregorian plainsong sparked the new interest in introits—in Europe first, and then worldwide.

When it was released in America by Angel (a sign surely), the monks' disk rose on the pure swelling arc of their voices past Gorecki and the rappers and the three ceaseless tenors to the top of the charts, lower than heaven but plenty high enough—double platinum, in fact, in just 17 weeks. All the material is in the public domain, and the monks don't do lunch: That's music-executive heaven. Other recording companies climbed on the bandwagon and into the nave. They plundered their back catalogues for plainsong, blew off the dust, and tarted up covers.

The Spanish friars' competition turned out to be not Snoop or Garth but—other monks!

All these hapless celebrity monks might be better off—royalties apart—and safer at the mercy of old barbarians than in the hands of New Age marketeers. Plainsong is being sold (“plainsong”/“sold,” the juxtaposition marks the giddy alliance) not as an aching stretch for eternity that engages all one's energies but as background noise for breathing exercises and stress reduction, an alternative to birdcalls and whale songs and a flute over surf. We are encouraged to “chill to the chant.” I have heard Italy called many things in my lifetime but not till now—and who expected to live so long?—in a TV commercial hawking two disks by *Italian* friars, “the land where Gregorian chant began.” (The swipe at the Spanish parvenus was clean and telling.) The set carried a money-back guarantee of satisfaction, and it could be bought with a credit card by calling 1-800-55-MONKS.

Did the singers ever dream that the rapt and songful prayer, the holy texts through which they seek to transcend this imperfect world, would be used to numb minds to all the planet's fault lines? Or that their song would have a place in the endless line of slippery enthusiasms we get hold of for a time—hula hoops, pet rocks, one singing nun, oat bran, disco, aerobics, deficit reduction, broccoli, postmodern cool, premillennial angst? What should be cause for celebration—the widely shared rediscovery of one of the glories of the civilization—is clouded by an inquiry into motive. The song's the same, but the meaning has been leached from it: a triumph of space-pod technique. Thus can the New Age instill nostalgia for a Dark Age.

The culture evolves, and dies if it does not. But stable common points of reference are harder to locate, the more so if we take our bearings from the time's deceptive motion. Some say Yeets now, or face life without the mediation of the novelist's art, or whistle plainsong while lacing up the rollerblades. The manuscript is torn through a line, so small a break it should not matter. And yet the absent line makes sense of the page.

—James Morris

# History, Issues & Ideas

## Washington, Somoza and the Sandinistas

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**Morris H. Morley**

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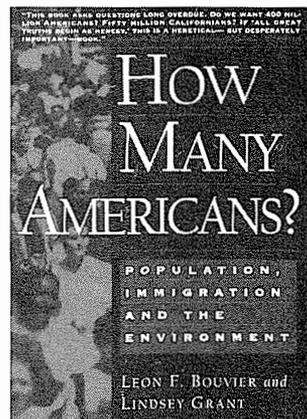


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This work takes a broad look at the way Americans think about and attempt to deal with physical pain that is more than transient. The experiences of both caregivers and patients are discussed, especially against the American expectation of stoic behavior. Specific subgroups of patients, children, women, and the elderly, further illuminate our expectations about the existence, validity, and proper communication of pain. *Sheridan's argument is simple, namely, that pain is whatever the patient says it is and must be recognized as such.*—Wilson Library Bulletin  
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# PAIN'S DOMINION

*Medical science works new wonders every day, but until recently Western physicians and scientists have shown remarkably little interest in pain.*

*That is beginning to change. David Morris surveys today's rethinking of the nature and treatment of pain. Kathleen Foley looks at the role of the new view of pain in current debates over euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide. And Richard Selzer assays an experience that is shared by virtually all of humankind yet felt by each individual in an absolutely private way.*

## What We Make of Pain

BY DAVID B. MORRIS

Jeremy Bentham—the great-grandfather of modern utilitarian thought—offers a useful jolt to normal opinion in his claim that pain, far from constituting merely an unwelcome occasion to race for the medicine cabinet, holds sway over individual lives much as a sovereign power governs a state. Pain, that is, rules us not only when it appears in full regalia, displaying its power like a king at a banquet, but also when it remains behind the scenes, more or less invisible, its presence diffused through a thousand daily acts such as the care we take opening a jackknife or stepping across an icy patch of sidewalk. Like it or not, pain lends an underlying stability to our lives—something we count on, build on, work around—and Bentham's insight thus helps us imagine the deep sense of crisis a person might experience when, inexplicably, pain seems to go crazy.

Intense and prolonged pain, as recent controversies about physician-assisted suicide

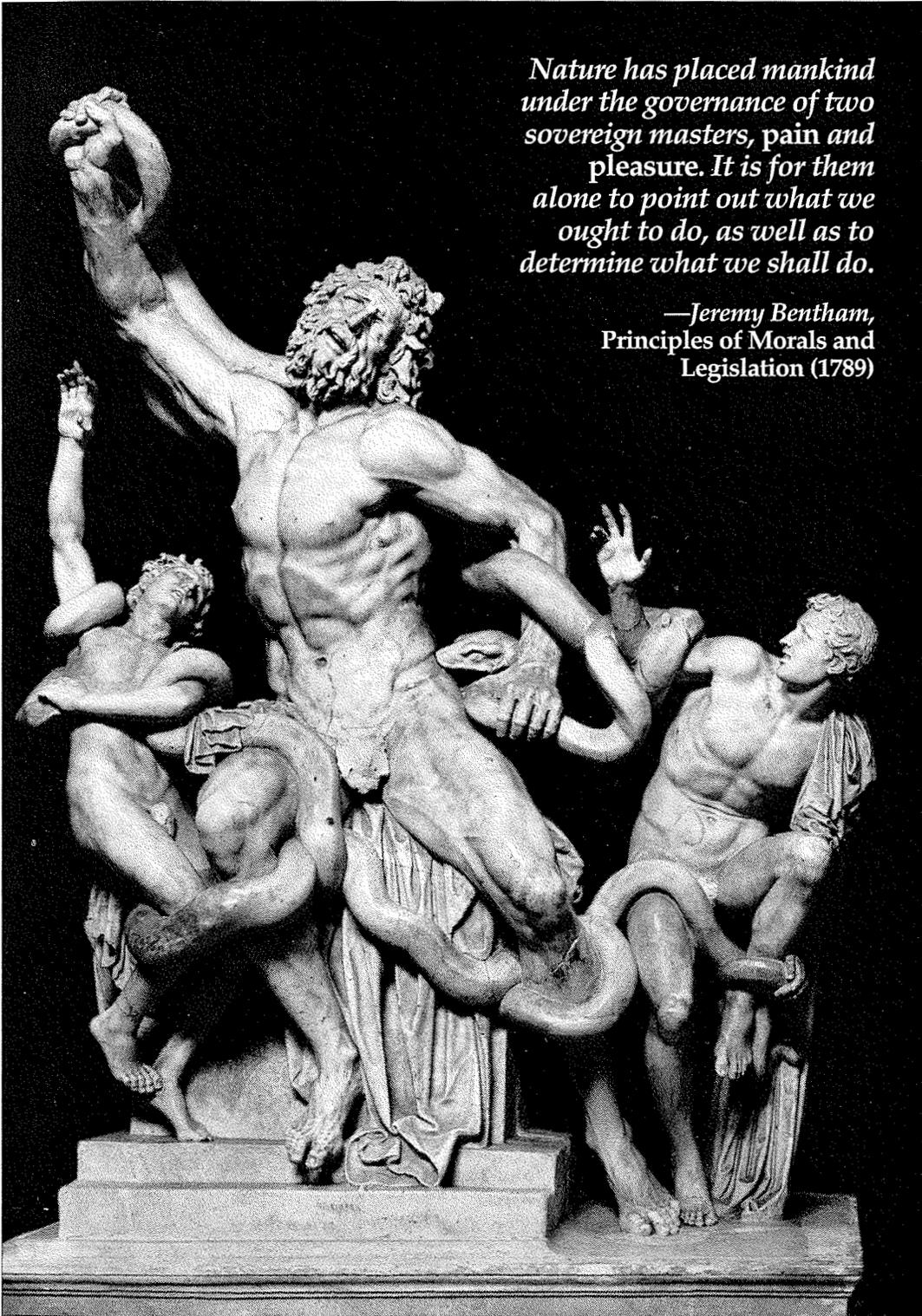
make clear, has driven people to take their own lives. Such intractable pain no longer governs a life, in the Benthamite sense of providing a source of underlying stability, but plunges the sufferer into a state so unfamiliar and frightening that it can resemble sheer chaos. We know what to expect from acute pain: It comes, it goes, it follows the rules. Chronic pain, however, lingers and torments and threatens never to leave. It subsumes a wide variety of baffling attacks, from recurrent headache and low-back misery to tic douloureux, phantom limb, and the completely mysterious pain of "unknown etiology." So great are the differences, for example, that medical treatment good for acute pain is generally unsuitable for chronic pain of unknown cause.

Indeed, the distinction between *chronic* and *acute* underlies sweeping changes in contemporary thinking about pain. One aspect of this rethinking centers on new drug therapies,

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*Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.*

—Jeremy Bentham,  
*Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789)



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especially opiates and opioid narcotics, often prescribed together with nonopioids and with adjuvant analgesics such as tricyclic antidepressants, anticonvulsants, and benzodiazepines. Drugs alone, however, cannot control the wide range of pain syndromes, and an individual's over-reliance on drugs may simply exacerbate the problem. Thus, even more exciting is a second and far less familiar aspect of the current revolution in thinking about pain, one that goes beyond the biomedical focus on nerves and neurotransmitters to consider the ways in which biology, mind, and culture interact.

Pain is such a familiar event within medicine—the most common symptom bringing doctor and patient together—that, paradoxically, it often tends to go unnoticed, like the air we breathe or waiting room art. Its role in diagnosis is crucial, but thereafter doctors too often find pain of little importance. Twenty years after a chilling study showed widespread medical undertreatment for pain, the *American Journal of Public Health* reported in 1993 that 80 percent of health professionals believe that such undertreatment is still a serious problem in their facilities. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says that cancer pain, for example, goes “frequently undertreated.” Such undertreatment cannot stem simply from fears that narcotic medications might prove addictive, since a well-known study puts the rate of addiction among a hospital population at far less than one percent. Undertreatment for pain in medical settings has sources that run far deeper than a reluctance to provide adequate medication.

The dismissive or contradictory attitudes that most people—not just health professionals—hold toward pain seem rooted not in biology but in culture. Life in modern Western societies teaches us that drugstores contain a pharmacopoeia of over-the-counter pills that effectively, if temporarily, cancel pain. Any-

thing that can be erased by an over-the-counter product hardly seems worth a second thought. But such an attitude may prove lethal when it leads us to undertreat intractable pains such as those often caused by cancer. Moreover, like taxes, government regulation of narcotics in America tends to make doctors a little edgy. Nobody wants to show up in computers that track prescription drug abuse. Then, too, somewhere in our heritage lurks the moral notion that pain builds character. This tangled knot of thought produces the paradoxical American belief that too little is being done to relieve pain and that we take too many drugs. As often, the public is both confused and correct.

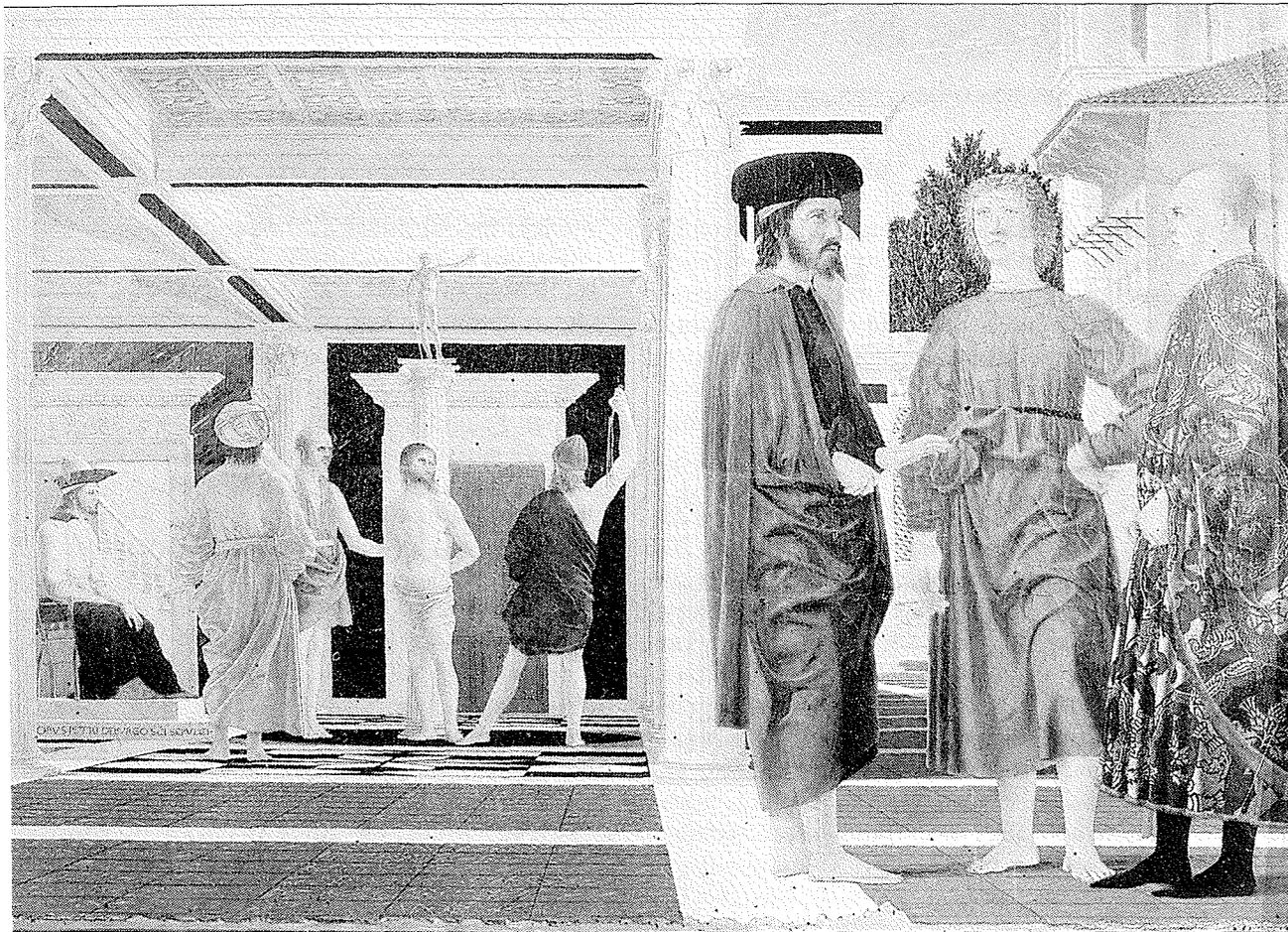
## II

To understand our modern confusion and its connection with the still-emerging revolution in thinking about pain, we might consider three different visual representations of the subject. The first is Piero della Francesca's enigmatic painting *The Flagellation*, finished about 1460 and ranked among the most famous works of the early Renaissance. It depicts, through an advanced and almost mathematically precise treatment of visual perspective, a somewhat ambiguous drama played out in *two* specific and vastly different historical spaces and times. As their clothing shows, the three larger figures clearly inhabit the painter's contemporary world of quattrocento Italy. Within the interior, however, we see another group positioned some 1,400 years earlier: the two torturers who stand on either side of Jesus with their whips upraised, as Pontius Pilate and a mysterious turbaned figure look on.

Indeed, the painting, like pain, is full of questions. Who are the three well-dressed contemporary figures? What are they doing

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*David B. Morris is a writer living in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He is associate editor of the journal Literature and Medicine and the author of three prize-winning books, The Religious Sublime (1972), Alexander Pope: The Genius of Sense (1984), and The Culture of Pain (1991). Copyright © 1994 by David B. Morris.*



The Flagellation (c. 1460) by Piero della Francesca

here in the vicinity of this biblical scene of flagellation? Why does the flagellation, the theological importance of which is surely paramount, proceed in the background? Such questions have sparked a variety of ingenious and conflicting explanations, but none directly address the question we need to ask here: How does the painting invite us to think about pain? The answer turns out to be entwined with an account of Piero's strange mixture of disparate historical places and times.

**T**he best explanation of the painting has been proposed by art historian Marilyn Aronberg Lavin. She identifies two powerful Renaissance figures among the contemporary group on the right: Ludovico Gonzaga, a nobleman, and Ottaviana Ubaldini della Carda, a famous astrologer. (As befits his occult profession, Ottaviana wears an exotic, eastern-style hat.) Both men, Lavin explains, had recently lost a son, one to death, the other to crippling dis-

ease. The barefoot youth standing between the two bereaved fathers thus represents an idealized, angelic "son" figure—whose loss brings them together. Their loss, meanwhile, helps explain why Piero should represent them as if standing alongside the biblical scene of flagellation. The subject of the painting, we might say, is pain ancient and modern, visible and invisible. Pain is what draws the two disparate historical scenes into a single field of thought: Jesus' calm acceptance of the torturers' blows offers guidance to the grieving fathers. It reminds them that God's will demanded that even his own Son should suffer. The painting may have served as a meditative consolation. Lavin shows that it exactly fits a space in front of the altar in Ludovico's private chapel.

Ludovico's choice would have been quite sound. Meditative solace in the late Middle Ages, tendered with the vast authority and empathy of the omniscient church, was likely to be far more effective in countering pain than

medications available from a culture in which teeth were pulled in public squares with pin-cers resembling fireplace tongs and surgeons still belonged to the guild of barbers. Others might have recourse to Stoic philosophy or to folk beliefs that linked pain to pre-Christian demonology. Drug therapies certainly had little to offer the people of this time.

**W**estern pharmacology had advanced very little some 200 years later, at the dawn of the scientific revolution in Europe, when readers encountered a schematic kneeling figure in the posthumously published *Treatise of Man* (1662) of René Descartes. Insignificant as it might seem, this figure initiates and epitomizes the tradition that for the next 300 years will decisively redefine pain as a medical matter of nerves and neurotransmitters.

Cartesian physiology did not sever all ties with the past. It retained the old idea that the body moves with assistance from small organisms called "animal spirits" produced and stored in the brain. These minute, rarefied particles were believed to travel through the nerves, which Descartes described as hollow tubes containing tiny filaments that terminate in the brain. Pain, as Descartes described it, works by means of a simple mechanism. The fast-moving particles of fire disturb the filaments in the nerve of the foot. The disturbance passes along the length of the nerve fiber until it reaches the brain, where it activates the animal spirits, which in turn travel down through the nerves to the muscles, producing the movement that removes, say, foot from flame.

The key concept for Descartes was the idea of mechanism. The impulse traveling from the site of injury to the brain, he explained, produces pain "just as, pulling on one end of a cord, one simultaneously rings a bell which hangs at the opposite end." This rope-pull model of pain, however primitive, is a direct precursor of the standard

medical model developed from Cartesian principles in the mid-19th century and (in many quarters) still going strong. Doctors and researchers adhering to the medical model talk about nociception and endorphins rather than about filaments and animal spirits, but the basic idea is unchanged. They view pain as strictly the result of an internal mechanism that sends a signal from the site of tissue damage to the brain. Most people in the Western world grow into adulthood believing in some version of this Cartesian picture.

Crucial implications of the mechanistic view will be evident if we consider what is absent from Descartes's illustration. Notice how he—or at least his illustrator—suspends the human figure in a limbo outside time or space. There is literally almost no ground to stand on. The diagram cannot tell us whether

the kneeling figure is aristocrat or commoner, French or English, Chris-

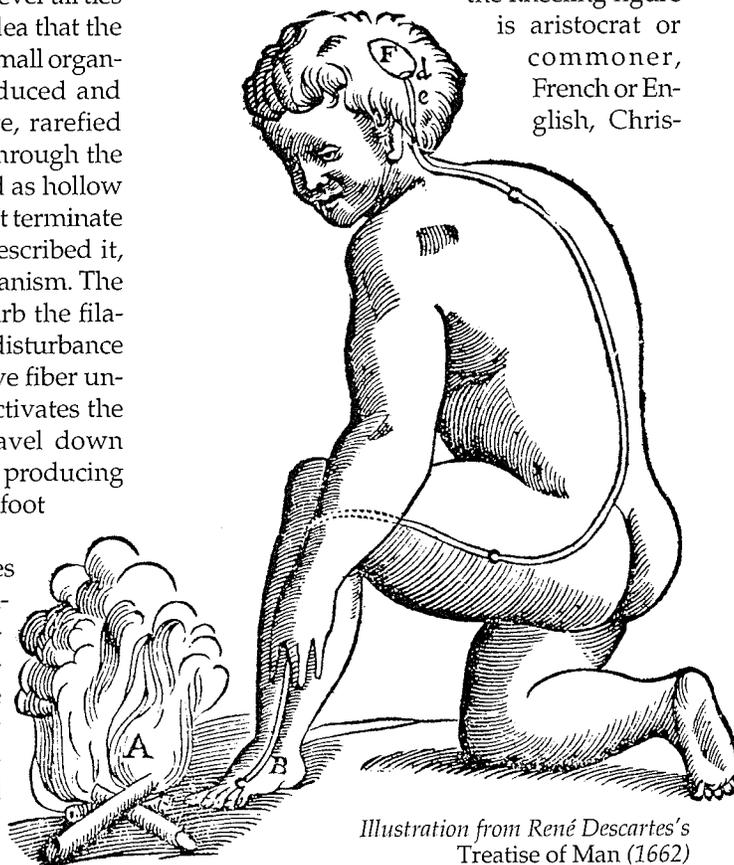


Illustration from René Descartes's *Treatise of Man* (1662)

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tian or Jew, even, perhaps, male or female. The calculated blankness probably reflects a desire to situate scientific truth in an abstract or universal realm beyond the irrelevant historical accidents of a specific time and place. But the vagueness of the drawing is exactly the point. Descartes, in this early version of the medical model, gives us pain in a vacuum.

**T**he diagram, further, is not a quaint or neutral artifact but a salvo in the battle of the ancients versus the moderns. The letters and bold lines, as if accompanying a theorem in geometry, reflect a deliberate assault on earlier ways of understanding pain. Science, in effect, is declaring its superiority over the extensive discourses on pain in theology, philosophy, art, and folklore, which are implicitly commanded to fall silent. The advantages of this new way of thinking are obvious, and we all stand in debt to René Descartes and practitioners of modern, scientific medicine. Our encounter with Piero, however, helps us to identify what has been lost and to note how far Descartes and his successors have succeeded in stripping away the complex fabric of personal and cultural experience that once enfolded pain.

It is probably high time that the flagellation of Descartes stop, particularly since he distinguishes himself from his followers by insisting that we feel pain only when the physical motion of the nerve fibers and animal spirits is perceived by the mind or soul. (This insistence explains his otherwise bizarre claim that animals do not feel pain; animals, he believed, do not possess minds or souls.) Whatever his responsibility for the medical model of pain, the modern world has very successfully out-Descarted Descartes. In rejecting the earlier view represented by Piero, we perfected an idea of pain so blank and stripped down that, much to our eventual confusion, it acknowledges no meaning or social context at all.

The confusion of contemporary attitudes is captured in a striking work by

American artist George Dergalis (b. 1928). The painting, which appeared in a 1989 exhibition of headache art called *Through the Looking Glass*, is entitled simply *Anguish* (see page 14). Here, as if revisiting Descartes's kneeling figure with a zoom lens three centuries later, Dergalis depicts the ultimate triumph of the medical model. Pain exists now as a meaningless torment, a soundless scream devoid of content, entirely cut off from the surrounding social world. Without even a hint of landscape to ground him, the anonymous sufferer keeps his eyes squeezed shut in solipsistic inwardness as the disjointed vertical planes suggest psychic splintering and disintegration. This is truly a life torn apart: mind and body both at a breaking point. Detached from meaning and social context, reinvented as mere agonized entrapment, pain stretches before us as a potentially endless shuttle of electrochemical impulses. It threatens not only health but also any prospect of interior coherence. We are no longer ourselves, almost inhuman, howling like injured beasts, masks of fragments that pain reshapes in its own twisted image.

The dread implicit in George Dergalis's painting reflects the claim that people today fear death far less than they fear dying in terrible pain. Meaningless pain has, in this sense, absorbed one last subliminal meaning: as the deepest nameless horror at the end of the mind. Advanced drug therapies may relieve some of this dread, but not all. Even the most aggressive therapies for cancer pain will not help a small percentage of patients. Opiates do not relieve every kind of pain. Chronic pain in particular often resists and baffles current medical technologies. And the damage goes beyond the bleakness facing people for whom the biological revolution brings no relief. As specialists are beginning to show, the medical model of pain—built on Cartesian principles and elaborated over the last several centuries of ongoing research in anatomy and physiology—is fundamentally inadequate.

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### III

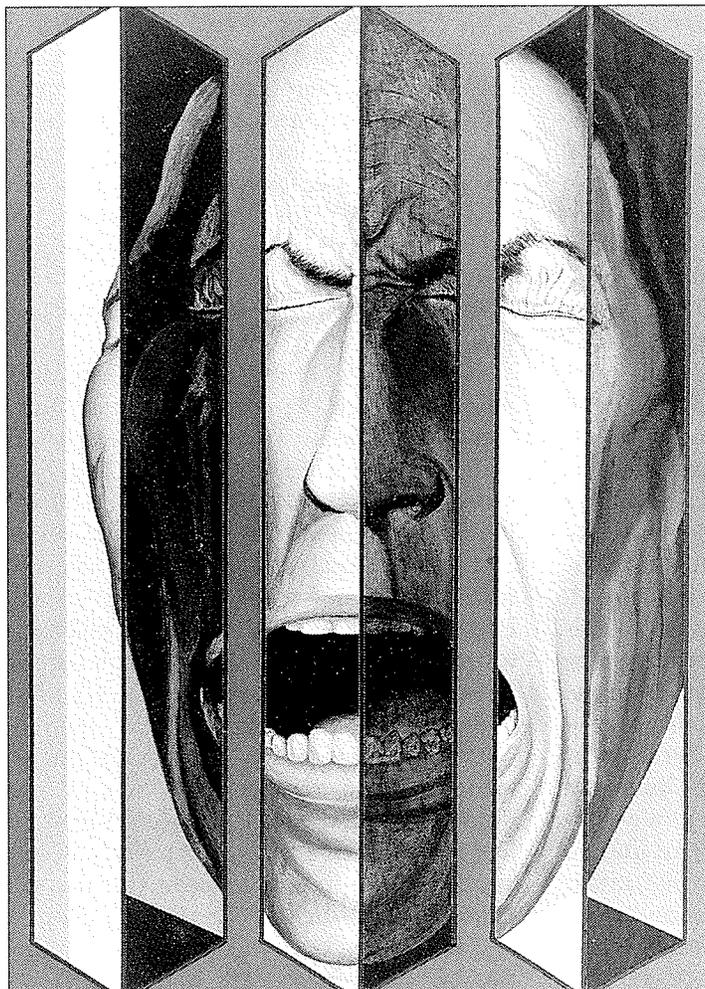
We need to respect the destructive, panic-inducing power of pain that Dergalis captures. Many people today find themselves in situations in which time and drugs fail to bring relief. Such pain may expand to fill the patient's entire consciousness and to create permanent disability. Quality of life measurably plummets. Indeed, a life filled with intractable pain is not just arduous and fundamentally disordered but very likely pathological. Patients suffering from chronic low-back pain—the most common form of nonmalignant chronic pain—experience

rates of depression three to four times higher than those of the general population. The social costs, moreover, are immense. Pain in the United States alone—from headache to cancer—causes more than 900 million lost workdays each year at a total cost of \$120 billion. The distinguished British specialist Patrick Wall describes pain as “the greatest health problem of our age.” The medical model, in short, has left us with a mounting dilemma.

The dimensions of the problem have indeed begun to approach crisis, but its true scope would require us to imagine human faces behind every statistic. For example,

some 20 million Americans suffer from arthritis and another seven million from low-back pain. About three percent of the U.S. population experiences daily headaches, and 10 percent suffers weekly headaches. Every day one in six Americans is in pain. The National Center for Health Statistics estimated that in 1988 one quarter of the American population experienced moderate to excruciating pain that required major therapy such as opioid narcotics. During that same year, 19 percent of Americans were partially disabled by pain for periods of weeks or months, and another two percent were permanently disabled.

We can observe a dim reflection of all this faceless pain in the desperate and often compulsive search for relief. In 1989 Americans spent \$1 billion for prescription analgesics and another \$2.2 billion for over-the-counter painkillers. Meanwhile, the annual world out-



*Anguish, by George Dergalis (1989)*

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put of aspirin stands at 30,000 tons. This mountain of pills suggests that pain is not so much receding in the face of modern progress as consolidating its position as an immovable force. Immovable and monolithic—but not homogeneous. Not all pain is the same. There are almost as many different varieties of pain as roses, from the everyday cramp and ache of arthritis to the terrifying conviction in panic disorder that your chest is about to explode. (Cancer pain in particular has a very distinctive profile.) We seem in no danger of running out of pain despite a cornucopia of biomedical publications and overflowing medicine cabinets. Rather, as the statistics mount, there seems solid weight behind Norman Cousins's intuitive claim that no form of illiteracy in the United States is more widespread or costly than ignorance about pain: "what it is, what causes it, how to deal with it without panic."

If the public is ignorant about pain, it may be because the medical profession has not yet provided a sound education. A 1988 study of 28 British medical schools revealed that four had no teaching about intractable pain and that the others averaged just over three hours in five years. John J. Bonica, founding president of the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP), recently reviewed 17 top textbooks in medicine, surgery, and oncology, finding just one-half of one percent of the space devoted to "a detailed description of the symptomatic treatment of acute postoperative, post-traumatic, visceral, and cancer pain." In a 1989 interview, Bonica described the general situation bluntly: "No medical school has a pain curriculum."

We are left, then, with a large-scale crisis of pain that our systems of public and professional education are so far unable to address effectively. They are ineffective partly because, whether through silence or misinformation, they perpetuate the errors of the standard medical model that we have absorbed into our general cultural thinking about pain over the past 200 years. Fortu-

nately, a new (if still unformulated and unrecognized) model of pain seems to offer a way of reconciling the strengths of Piero and Descartes.

#### IV

The change in thinking currently under way does not mean wholly abandoning the medical model of pain—which consolidates a great deal of brilliant research about the human nervous system—but rather absorbing it into a more comprehensive perspective that I call *biocultural*. This more inclusive model adds four crucial propositions:

1. Pain is more than a medical issue and more than a matter of nerves and neurotransmitters.
2. Pain has historical, psychological, and cultural dimensions.
3. Meaning is often fundamental to the experience of pain.
4. Minds and cultures (as makers of meaning) have a powerful influence on the experience of pain, for better or worse.

Doctors wedded to the Cartesian view of pain implicit in the medical model will find these four propositions instantly counterintuitive, if not just plain wrong. (Patients well schooled in a medicalized culture tend to resist them as well.) British gerontologist Ray Tallis expresses the prevailing opinion: "I have a prejudice against pain," he writes, "believing that, once it has done its job of warning us of danger, it is meaningless."

To be sure, pain is meaningless if we view it merely as the product of nociception: an electrochemical signal transmitted over nerve pathways from the site of tissue damage to the brain. Pain from this perspective is chiefly a problem in biochemistry, with no more meaning than a malfunctioning alarm bell. By contrast, a biocultural model of pain, while it insists on the value of medical knowledge about nociception, holds that

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pain is never entirely a matter of nerves and neurotransmitters but taps into our emotional, psychological, and cultural experience in ways deeply entangled with the meanings we make or inherit.

One great advantage of a biocultural model is that it provides a far better account of chronic pain. Indeed, the medical model breaks down notoriously when confronted with the ambiguities of chronic pain. Chronic low-back pain, for example, often proves impossible to trace to an organic lesion, such as a prolapsed (or "slipped") disk. Neurosurgeon John Loeser examined 10,000 cases of low-back injury submitted for compensation in the state of Washington during 1977 and reported that 75 percent of the cases showed no physical findings. Although most adults who complain of back pain have demonstrable lumbar disk disease, so do 70 percent of adults without complaints. (Treatment can be almost as mysterious as the complaint. A recent study reported in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* showed that long-term functioning of patients treated for back pain was similar whether doctors prescribed pain medication and bed rest or emphasized self-care and education. The main difference? One-year costs for treatment with pain medication and bed-rest were twice those of self-care and education.) The medical model not only justifies countless unnecessary surgeries; it also fails to say why the strongest signs predicting that a worker will develop chronic back pain are job dissatisfaction and unsatisfactory social relations in the workplace.

The truth is that we cannot understand chronic pain through an analysis of tissue damage alone. In *The Social Context of the Chronic Pain Sufferer* (1992), Ranjan Roy, professor of social work and psychiatry at the University of Manitoba, offers a scrupulous review of current research showing how chronic pain sweeps into its domain such nonbiological contributing causes as family conflict, economic stress, and a history of emotional trauma. Such often-invisible blows can

help transform a local injury—a slip in the shower or a whiplash accident—into an intractable and apparently endless torment. Or the causes may recede into a distant past. One study showed that women suffering from irritable bowel syndrome, where an organic cause is not clear, proved significantly more likely than women with organic inflammatory bowel disease to report a history of severe lifetime sexual victimization. Chronic pain, moreover, is so widespread and resistant to traditional medical treatment that it calls for a more inclusive way of thinking.

For what we think matters greatly. The ancient Babylonians attributed headaches to an assault by malign demons. Does it make a difference today if you attribute your headache to eyestrain or to a brain tumor? Meaning can facilitate or retard therapy. Even the belief that pain means nothing—if it replaces, say, a belief that pain means terminal cancer—can be life giving. The American writer Reynolds Price experienced such a breakthrough after drugs and traditional medicine failed to relieve his constant torment following multiple surgeries and chemotherapy for spinal cancer. In near despair, he discovered that hypnosis and biofeedback offered a technique for controlling his pain, which led to a liberating insight. He described his new awareness and the recovery it permitted: "Now my mind understood that *The harm is done. It cannot be repaired; pain signifies nothing. Begin to ignore it.*" That which signifies nothing is very different from that which means nothing, as the zero in mathematics teaches us.

## V

The mind's role in constructing meaning—even the zero-degree of meaning that pain signifies nothing—is basic to a biocultural model of pain, but argument alone seems unlikely to persuade skeptics or to overcome centuries of medical training. Fortunately, five areas of research—scientific redefinition, cross-cultural studies,

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interethnic studies, psychological studies, and studies of pain beliefs—offer hope that major change is underway.

At its founding in 1974, the International Association for the Study of Pain set up a Subcommittee on Taxonomy. The definition it published five years later is fascinating for the steps it takes to loosen up the medical model. "Pain," the IASP authors wrote, "is an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage." Cartesian mind/body dualism comes under implicit rebuke in the phrase "sensory and emotional" experience. The strategic use of "or" eliminates a direct one-to-one link between tissue damage and pain. Henry K. Beecher, in his classic article on World War II battlefield injuries, showed persuasively that even terrible wounds do not correlate directly with reports of pain. Tissue damage remains the gold standard, but it's clear that pain has various currencies. The IASP definition confirms that people often report pain in the absence of any known lesion and that pain cannot be regarded simply as the response to a noxious stimulus.

The most illuminating changes provided in the IASP definition occur in a series of annotations. There the authors emphasize that pain must be understood not only as an "emotional experience" but also as "always subjective." Further, they distinguish sharply between pain and nociception: "Activity induced in the nociceptor and nociceptive pathways by a noxious stimulus," they insist, "is not pain, which is always a psychological state." We should not be surprised that the revolutionary impact of these annotations gets somewhat muted in the one-sentence IASP definition. This is how committees handle controversial issues. It is common practice in the history of science to couch radical theories in a style that makes them seem no more than a restatement of accepted ideas.

The revolutionary distinction between

nociception and pain runs parallel to another key distinction between pain as sensation and as perception. The medical model treats pain as a sensation. Hence the value of animal research, since rats and cats share with humans a basic somatosensory system. When pain is redefined as a perception, however, the limits of animal research become clear. The kneeling figure in the Descartes illustration might as well have been an enormous cat: The rope-pull pain mechanism works the same for felines as for homo sapiens. The importance of the human brain cannot be overstated in a biocultural model, since the brain is the organ responsible for all pain. "All sensory phenomena, including nociception," as the current president of the IASP puts it, "can be altered by conscious or unconscious mental processes." Reynolds Price found the truth of this view on his own.

Many of these lexical and conceptual changes are reflected in the summary account by the noted pain specialist Allan I. Basbaum, professor of anatomy and physiology at the University of California (San Francisco). Basbaum writes:

Pain is not just a stimulus that is transmitted over specific pathways but rather a complex perception, the nature of which depends not only on the intensity of the stimulus but on the situation in which it is experienced and, most importantly, on the affective or emotional state of the individual. Pain is to somatic stimulation as beauty is to a visual stimulus. It is a very subjective experience.

If pain is always subjective and always a psychological experience, the implications are clear. Human subjectivity cannot somehow be washed out as an impure and undesirable variant in the analysis of pain. Furthermore, subjectivity is never a wholly private, individual state, because individual human beings exist only within the intersubjective framework of specific cultures. Cultures, as they help to shape and to

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constrain human mental processes, necessarily play a role in pain.

**I**t follows, if culture plays a role in pain, that pain should differ across cultures, and a growing body of evidence suggests that this is so. One group of researchers studied people with low-back pain in the United States and New Zealand, and concluded that American patients used more medication, were more likely to receive pretreatment compensation, and experienced greater "emotional and behavioral disruption." A similar comparison of Japanese and American low-back-pain patients found that Japanese patients were significantly less impaired in "psychological, social, vocational, and avocational functioning." Another study comparing low-back-pain patients in the United States, Japan, Mexico, Colombia, Italy, and New Zealand again found that American patients were "clearly most dysfunctional." Dysfunction should not be viewed as a reaction to pain, as if pain were a stimulus and dysfunction the response. Rather, pain here *includes* the culturally created and reinforced meaning that a person is dysfunctional.

The diverse cultural meanings and contexts that give pain its changing character have been explored by participants in the Harvard Program in Medical Anthropology. The volume describing their work—*Pain as Human Experience: An Anthropological Perspective* (1992)—offers abundant illustration that a purely biological approach misses an essential component of pain. Even the taxonomy of pain changes significantly across cultures. The Sakhalin Ainu people of Japan, for example, distinguish among at least three different kinds of headaches: "bear headaches" (like the heavy steps of a bear), "deer headaches" (like the light steps of running deer), and "woodpecker headaches" (like a woodpecker pounding a tree trunk). Is it relevant that pain here is described primarily through *sound* and that the sounds all issue from birds and animals (rather than

from jackhammers or chain saws)?

Such cross-cultural approaches to pain find support in the parallel exploration of interethnic experience that began with Mark Zborowski's pioneering study *People in Pain* (1969). Zborowski studied American veterans hospitalized after World War II, and his findings indicate that different ethnic groups experience pain quite differently. The ethnic groups he studied—Italians, Jews, Irish, and what he called Old Americans—turn out to experience pains as distinctive as their respective cuisines.

**W**e need to keep in mind two qualifications. First, Zborowski's veterans were all males. Differences in biology and in cultural roles make gender an important influence on pain. Migraine headaches, for example, occur three times more often in women than in men, moderating during pregnancy, which suggests a link to estrogen. Second, Zborowski's stoic Irishmen and hypervocal Jews look uncomfortably like cardboard stereotypes. Yet the experience of 1950s Jews and Irishmen differs greatly from that of their assimilated grandchildren, raised on MTV and *Terminator II*. Our experience of pain today is no less mediated by our culture, and we too may resemble stereotypes in a few years. The *Nuprin Pain Report* (1985) finds that second- or third-generation Americans are more likely than their first-generation counterparts to report suffering from headaches, backaches, muscle pains, and stomach pains. Another study detects significant variation among ethnic groups in the "affective" dimension of pain. Still another team of researchers concludes that variations in pain intensity may be affected by "attitudes, beliefs and emotional and psychological states" associated with particular ethnic groups.

The force of such studies increases when we look at research broadly classified as psychological. Ever since publication of *The Psychology of Pain* (1978), edited by Richard A. Sternbach and now in a second edition, it has

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## Pain and America's Culture of Death

Throughout history, people have called for medical practitioners to assist in the deaths of patients suffering from intractable pain as a result of advanced disease. But while many doctors themselves have advocated such assistance, including those of ancient Greece, Western medical practice has generally cleaved to the view of Hippocrates, who argued firmly against physicians' "giving a deadly drug to any patient."

Not that the Hippocratic view has reigned unchallenged. Today in the United States support for mercy killing is widespread and growing both among the general public and health-care professionals. A 1991 collaborative study undertaken by the *Boston Globe* and the Harvard School of Public Health found that 64 percent of its 1,004 respondents believed that physicians should be allowed to give terminally ill patients a lethal injection. And a 1988 survey of physicians in the San Francisco area found that 70 percent believed that the terminally ill should have the option of active euthanasia (left undefined), while 54 percent felt that the physician should administer the lethal dose.

Not surprisingly, attitudes toward this most troubling of subjects vary greatly according to shifts in social conditions and values. As Daniel Callahan shows in his eloquent book, *The Troubled Dream of Life* (1993), support for euthanasia and doctor-assisted dying increases sharply in times when the bonds of community are weak and the insistence upon individual rights is strong. Ours is such a time. And the cry for medically assisted dying grows ever louder under the pressure of conditions peculiar to our age. These include advances in high-technology life-support systems, growing numbers of cancer and AIDS patients struggling under the Damoclean diagnosis of fatal illness, the "graying" of the population, and limitations on health-care resources, particularly for patients with terminal illness.

But there is yet another factor that should not be ignored: the inadequate treatment and understanding of pain. Reports of the

undertreatment of cancer pain have received considerable press recently, but unfortunately the phenomenon they address is nothing new. The failure to administer appropriate or adequate medication to the terminally ill stems from a number of causes. To begin with, physicians are generally undertrained in the area of pain management. (Significantly, research shows that those health-care professionals who perceive themselves to be less competent at managing pain are more likely to endorse assisted suicide or euthanasia.) In addition, many physicians, like many nonphysicians, bring to the use of opioids and sedatives attitudes highly colored by subjective opinions and cultural beliefs, attitudes which often dispose the physician to undertreat even the most severe states of pain, on the grounds, for example, that heavy sedation would reduce the patient to a "vegetative" state. Then, too, despite ethical and legal clarification of these matters, many health-care professionals remain uncertain about that region where the use of symptom-control methods blurs with either voluntary active euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide.

Countless studies reveal a wide range of serious physical and psychological symptoms among the terminally ill. Such symptoms, along with social and existential factors, comprise what physician Cecily Saunders calls "total pain" or what Eric Cassell names "global suffering." Unfortunately, most doctors lack both the range of expertise and the time to address the total pain of the patient. This can be tragic in the case of a cancer patient who is suffering from depression. Studies have shown that antidepressants can be strikingly effective in treating depressions among persons with severe physical illnesses; moreover, they can have a direct effect in reducing the chronic pain that may precipitate such depressions. Physicians may also fail to consider other factors affecting the patient's experience of pain, including relations with his family, religious beliefs, and even beliefs about pain itself.

To be sure, it is too much to expect physicians to be all things to all patients—and hubris

to think physicians can cure all suffering. But it is important both for physicians and for the terminally ill to know that the pain is multifaceted and that it can be addressed on a variety of fronts. The social support provided by a hospice may very successfully address the loneliness of an AIDS or cancer patient, for example, and thus help reduce his or her pain. It is certainly one of many means of addressing the total pain of an individual who might otherwise believe that the only relief from suffering and despair is self-inflicted or (if only the physician would agree) doctor-assisted death.

The much-discussed case of Dr. Jack Kevorkian illustrates too grimly the consequences of our ignorance about suffering in general and terminal pain in particular. From



*Dr. Kevorkian*

June of 1990 to November of 1993, Kevorkian assisted in the deaths of 20 patients, ranging in age from 41 to 73. Twelve were women and eight were men.

Ten had a history of cancer, and the others suffered from a variety of chronic medical illnesses, including Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, chronic obstructive lung disease, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. The details of the medical care of all of the 20 patients have not been made fully public, but interviews with some of the patients are available. One had chronic pain with significant psychological complications. This patient had seen a pain specialist but had refused psychiatric care. The only physician-patient aided by Kevorkian was reported to have significant pain as well as "anxiety." He had multiple myeloma with diffuse bone pain. According to limited family interviews and available tapes, approximately 10 patients may have had some pain. While incomplete data precludes authoritative discussion of the role of pain among this group of patients, it should be noted that Kevorkian is a pathologist by speciality, has had no specialized training in the medical and psychiatric care of patients with chronic illness, and ap-

pears to have accepted all of his patients' requests without addressing any of the complex factors that might have led to their decision to seek his help. Despite the murk surrounding Kevorkian's practice, many Americans hail him as a pioneer in physician-assisted suicide. But to lionize a doctor who assisted the deaths of people who might have received inadequate physical or psychological treatment for their pain seems, at best, premature.

At worst, it reflects unthinking sentimentality and misplaced respect for medical authority, currents of which, unfortunately, are sweeping through this country. Some caution, to say the least, is in order. Studies of legally tolerated euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide in the Netherlands are complex and tentative, but they should be sobering to Americans eager to see their nation follow suit. At the very least, such studies suggest that Dutch physicians have in many cases committed life-terminating acts without the explicit request of their patients. A slippery slope, indeed.

For the past 20 years, as a neuro-oncologist in a cancer center, I have cared for, or directed the care of, thousands of patients with pain and cancer. I know that the treatment of pain and suffering remains a complex medical problem, but I believe the least we can do is provide patients with treatment that encompasses their own needs as well as those of their families and their health-care providers—and that preserves the moral values of all parties involved.

How, then, as a pain specialist, do I respond to patients' requests for physician-assisted suicide? In the only way I can, by saying that I value their lives and their worth and therefore cannot kill them. I tell them, too, that I will care for them and treat their symptoms, and, if their pain cannot be adequately controlled while they are dying, that I will honor their choice to be sedated. And, last, I assure them that I will never abandon them but will remain to the end a witness to their dying.

—Kathleen M. Foley

*Kathleen M. Foley is Chief, Pain Service, Department of Neurology, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.*

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become routine to associate chronic pain with emotional states such as fear, loss, and anger. The specific link between chronic pain and clinical depression has proved elusive enough to generate a small library of studies. (Tricyclic antidepressants are effective in treating a wide range of chronic-pain patients.) Beyond depression, the impetus for much psychological research on pain doubtless comes from George L. Engel's classic study " 'Psychogenic' Pain and the Pain Prone Patient" (1959). In his clinically based analysis, Engel found that "pain prone" patients tended to be individuals for whom psychological conditions during childhood—often centering on punishment—create a template for adult experiences of pain and suffering. The novels of Sade, backed up by modern studies of sadomasochism, clearly indicate that some people seem compelled to inflict pain or to seek it. It is no surprise that people who feel driven toward extreme states of discipline or penance eventually find their way to pain.

The concept of psychogenic pain—pain generated in the absence of an organic lesion—remains controversial, but a recent study from the Baylor College of Medicine strongly suggests that for some people the mind plays a crucial role in creating pain. One hundred paid volunteers were told that the experiment in which they would participate involved an electric stimulator that might possibly produce a headache. The volunteers were not told that researchers set the stimulator at a level too low to produce a painful charge. The result? Fifty percent of the volunteers reported pain. A similar phenomenon reappears in the condition known as *couvade syndrome*, in which the male partners of pregnant women experience various symptoms of pregnancy, including abdominal pain.

The power of the mind to generate pain seems matched by a mysterious power to erase it. The placebo effect—sugar pills killing pain as effectively as morphine—is normally dismissed as an irritating variable in drug trials. Despite the widespread medical belief that a fixed fraction of the population (roughly one-

third) responds to placebos, Patrick D. Wall argues that the true figure ranges from almost zero to near 100 percent, depending on the circumstances of the trial. What matters most is that the placebo effect (by definition) requires patients to *believe* that they are receiving effective treatment. Placebos thus offer another illustration of how minds and beliefs help to reshape the experience of pain.

Studies in the personal and social psychology of pain radiate in so many directions that it is easy to ignore the central concern they share with mind and meaning. Take, for example, the malady now called *somatization disorder*, in which the most common symptom (among multiple complaints that cannot be traced to tissue damage) is pain. Women vastly outnumber men among its sufferers, and the origin of such shifty pain may be circuitous or impossible to pin down. Professor of psychiatry G. Richard Smith, in his book-length study of *somatization disorder*, cites research showing that a large percentage of women with pelvic or abdominal pain report childhood incidents of sexual abuse. Even a diagnosis may aggravate pain. Thus patients with arthritis report significantly less pain than patients diagnosed with *myofascial disorder*—the latter being a condition whose cause and status are still somewhat ambiguous. Other psychological research offers evidence that pain originating in demonstrable tissue damage can be exacerbated by events that are largely mental and emotional. Anger and "negative cognitions," for example, especially punishing responses from family members, have been shown to increase pain in a state as undeniably organic as chronic spinal cord injury.

Psychological research into what are called "pain beliefs" offers a wealth of support for a new biocultural model. Whatever school of psychology they represent, psychologists usually agree on the basic point that pain always involves learning. They often disagree on what exactly is learned—behaviors or beliefs—but some specialists now take the sensible position

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that learning about pain extends to *both* behaviors and beliefs. The academic turf wars of psychology would not matter much if they did not affect clinical treatment. Should clinicians treat behaviors only, ignoring the underlying pain beliefs? Will ignored pain beliefs simply find new modes of somatic expression? Some specialists contend that knowledge of a patient's pain beliefs allows them to help develop a personalized and effective coping strategy. Two researchers, Donald S. Ciccone and Roy C. Gresiak, go so far as to argue that the reason behaviorist techniques prove effective is precisely that patients develop (even if unknowingly) "new thinking skills."

**T**he research on beliefs about pain began in the 1980s, and several sophisticated instruments have now been developed to assess pain beliefs, including the Pain and Impairment Relationship Scale (PAIRS) and the Pain Beliefs Questionnaire. These instruments are not trouble free. (For instance, the Pain Beliefs Questionnaire perpetuates the myth that pain comes in two flavors: organic and psychological.) They nonetheless show promising uses. At Georgetown University, psychologist David A. Williams examines what he calls "core beliefs" about pain, which involve issues of self-blame, cause, and duration. Core beliefs, he argues, predict pain intensity. Researcher Mark Jensen finds that those patients function better who believe that they have some control over their pain, who believe in the value of medical services, who believe that family members care for them, and who believe that they are not severely disabled. Another study of 100 patients shows that pain beliefs correlate directly with treatment outcomes.

Disability is a phenomenon in which we can see with stark clarity how pain is tied to beliefs and culture. As specialists insist, disability is not synonymous with impairment. Pitcher Jim Abbott plays major-league baseball despite having been born without a right hand. He is impaired but not disabled. Disability is a malleable category reinvented by Western social-welfare systems to provide financial

help to individuals deemed unable to perform normal work. It also offers people new and possibly damaging ways to think about their pain. In Sweden between 1952 and 1982, conferral of permanent disability status for rheumatoid arthritis (for which diagnosis is relatively straightforward) showed no increase, whereas awards for the more mysterious category of back injury increased almost 3,800 percent. Perhaps Swedes endured a freakish 30-year eruption of injuries to the back, but it seems far more likely that the modern social creation of disability status encouraged many people with back pain to define themselves as disabled.

Through disability insurance, culture now regulates pain in ways that may well increase, prolong, or even create it. Doctors are asked not only to treat pain but also to judge whether it merits compensation—a dual role that can easily turn counter-therapeutic. How do you cure a patient you have already certified as disabled? A patient who receives continuing cash payments for disability has a powerful disincentive to recover. Although there is no warrant to support an older view that pain patients with pending legal claims exhibit something called "compensation neurosis," claims for compensation both complicate and impede effective treatment.

**P**ain in our culture thus includes the radically new meaning that it can be certified as disabling and exchanged for cash. This change means that we must take care to know whether we are talking about a person in pain, a pain patient, or a claimant. Each status implies a different cultural relation to pain, since not everyone with pain seeks medical help, and not everyone who seeks medical help has a claim pending. The stories of people who enter the cultural embrace of medicine or of law will be different from those people who do not. Or, to put it a little differently, their pain may well express quite different meanings, meanings perhaps completely unsuspected by the afflicted person, as when a spouse discovers that com-

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plaints of pain draw tender care from a long-remote husband or wife. Pain that brings with it an otherwise inaccessible good may be very hard to let go. Effective therapies probably will need to address not only the pain but also the unsuspected meaning it embodies.

## VI

Once we challenge the notion that pain is always meaningless, illustrations of meaningful pain begin to pop up almost anywhere. An engineer at a radio station explained how pain had wrecked the marriage of her elderly parents. Her mother interpreted pain as a symptom of serious illness, whereas her father dismissed it as a normal sign of aging. The husband called his wife a hypochondriac, the wife called her husband a fool, and their conflicting pain beliefs put them at each other's throats. Yet the example also indicates how the meanings of pain can remain almost invisible. The pain of the elderly, like the pain of children, is a topic about which we know very little—except that the poor and powerless usually suffer most. The past few years have seen an attack on long-standing medical myths (or beliefs) that infants don't feel pain. Our revised understanding of infancy and old age shows how the meanings of pain may vary not only across cultures but also within the course of a single lifetime.

It is our relatively recent cultural tendency to transform pain almost entirely into a medical problem that prevents us from recognizing the immense proliferation of meanings all around us. Western physicians, for example, may simply ignore the religious beliefs of their patients, even though religion for centuries has provided complex explanations for pain, from the divine retribution described in the Old Testament to the Gospels' sacrificial love. An unwed mother may experience the pain of childbirth as a fearful trial, while a ballerina comes to regard her bloody toes as a sign of luck. Some cultures employ pain in

rites of initiation designed to signify the passage to adulthood. Others use it as a punishment designed to safeguard public order. The ancient arts of body piercing and self-mutilation arrive in postmodern America filtered through pop icons and rock lyrics. The hottest fashion model in Paris, as of last year, was 21-year-old Eve Salvail, whose closely shaved head sports a serpentine dragon tattoo. Why the tattoo? "It symbolizes pain," she told *Women's Wear Daily*. Today pain can even make a fashion statement.

A recognition that pain belongs to a culture far wider than modern medicine lets us reappraise possibly damaging beliefs that we have more or less taken for granted. Among our most unshakable assumptions, for example, is the belief that pain comes in two kinds: physical and mental. This assumption has a common-sense logic in that a headache clearly differs from a broken heart. Yet the differences may be less important than our cultural heritage of mind/body dualism has led us to expect, and the damage implicit in a false distinction may spread unstoppably. Like Victorian women whose pain was dismissed as bogus or imaginary, many patients today go through a demoralizing experience with doctors who indicate a belief that the pain is not *real*. ("It's all in your head.") Real pain here means physical pain, anchored in visible tissue damage, understood according to the old medical model as a meaningless shuttle of electrochemical impulses.

**I**t is not nature but culture—reinforced by several centuries of medical progress—that provides us with the ready-made opposing categories of mental pain and physical pain. Indeed, some non-Western cultures proceed on the opposite assumption that mind and spirit are always involved in pain. Maybe the construction of a new biocultural model will allow us to reject or reformulate cultural beliefs—such as the division between mental pain and physical pain—that prove inaccurate and damaging. The task ahead, then, goes beyond educating



*Acupuncture is one form of "alternative" medicine that one in every three Americans resorts to for treatment of pain and illness. In 1990, Americans spent \$14 billion on unconventional therapies.*

doctors and patients about effective drug therapies. We ignore at great cost both the complex meanings of pain and the role of culture in promulgating a myth of meaninglessness. Pain is meaningless only when we *believe* in its meaninglessness, which provides just another example of how pain wraps itself in meaning. The pertinent question inside and outside the clinic is whether personal beliefs and cultural meanings that we bring to pain are accurate, positive, and helpful—or, as is too often the case, inaccurate, negative, and damaging.

One of the largest unresolved questions is who in our culture will be authorized to speak about pain. Will doctors retain the sole authorized voice, or will a biocultural model allow us to hear other voices currently silent, subjugated, or forced to the margins of public discussion?

Doctors who average seven minutes per patient may simply lack the tools and time to hear what patients themselves could tell them. (In my experience, nurses are far better listeners, but

their voices too may go unheard.) It may take assistants in nonmedical disciplines—such as anthropology or literature—to help gather and interpret the meanings with which patients and cultures endow pain. Such assistance in the past, for example, would have told us that many prominent 19th-century doctors believed blacks did not feel pain; that pain was divided by social class, with aristocrats believed to possess delicate and sensitive nervous systems that left them open to debilitating affliction, unlike the coarse laboring masses; that, ever since Plato described the womb as an animal roaming free within the body, women's pain has been interpreted within patriarchal cultures built upon myths about male power and female weakness. Today it could show us how we experience pain shaped by the institutions of our own time and place, such as television, sports, cinema, popular music, advertising, welfare, and a massive health-

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care bureaucracy.

A new model will not come easily. Ronald Melzack, who in the 1960s co-authored a ground-breaking theory of pain that focused chiefly on the modulation of nociceptive impulses, now works with quadriplegics suffering complete, verified severing of the spinal cord. No nociceptive impulses from the periphery can reach the cortex, yet these patients still feel pain. For Melzack, the main focus of pain research has shifted to the brain's neuro-matrix of interconnections, and it does not surprise him that scientists shy away from this complex region. "It is difficult," he says, "to deal with such problems as consciousness, awareness of one's own body, and the brain's capacity to create perceptions, memories, and every other aspect of cognitive activity." Although undeniably subject to biological laws, human consciousness opens out finally onto the changing historical field of culture, where the difficult influences that modulate pain mount exponentially.

Difficulties, however, are preferable to errors or illusions. In 1896 the world-famous neurologist and popular novelist S. Weir Mitchell appeared at Massachusetts General Hospital on the 50th anniversary of Ether

Day. The annual Ether Day rite commemorated the first public demonstration of the surgical use of ether, a near miraculous breakthrough—at Mass General in 1846—that spared later patients wide-awake incisions, unanesthetized amputations, and, not infrequently, death by shock. Mitchell read to the assembled medical audience a poem he had composed for the occasion, entitled "The Birth and Death of Pain." It included these bold, prophetic lines:

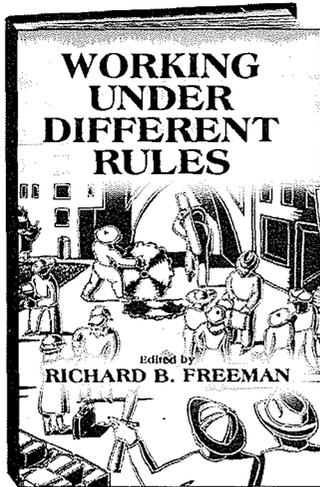
Whatever triumphs still shall hold the  
mind,  
Whatever gift shall yet enrich mankind,  
Ah! here no hour shall strike through all the  
years,  
No hour so sweet as when hope, doubt,  
and fears.  
'Mid deepening stillness, watched on  
eager brain,  
With Godlike will, decree the Death of Pain.

Pain did not die with the advent of effective surgical anesthesia. If anything, it has multiplied alarmingly. For that reason, among others, new wonder drugs to kill pain may now be less important than a recovered understanding of pain's connections with what we think and what our cultures say.

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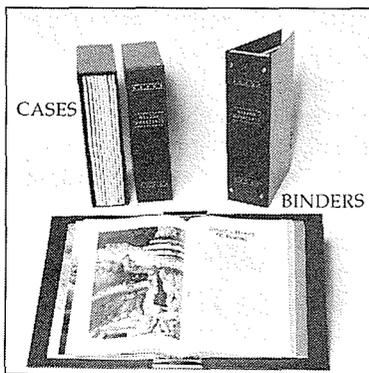
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# The Language of Pain

BY RICHARD SELZER

**W**hy do you write so much about pain? they ask me. To give it a name, I reply. And I am not sure what I mean. I try again: In October, when the leaves have fallen from the trees, you can see farther into the forest. Now do you see? No? Well, what is your notion of pain? Pain is fire, a ravaging, insatiable thing that insists upon utter domination; it is the occasion when the body reasserts itself over the mind; the universe contracts about the part that hurts; if the pain is not placated with analgesics, it will devour the whole organism. Only then will it too be snuffed. Still, pain is revelatory; in the blaze of it, one might catch a glimpse of the truth about human existence.

It was the poet Rilke who wrote that the events of the body cannot be rendered in language. Surely this is so with pain as with its opposite, orgasm. These extremes of sensation remain beyond the power of language to express. Say that a doctor is examining a patient who is in pain. The doctor needs to know the exact location of the pain and its nature. Is the pain sharp or dull? Steady or intermittent? Does it throb or pulse? Is it stabbing? A heavy pressure? Crampy? Does it burn? Sting? All these questions the doctor asks of the patient. But there is no wholly adequate way for the sufferer to portray his pain other than to cry out. In order to convey his pain, the patient, like the writer, must resort to metaphor, simile, imagery: "You want to know what it's like? It's as if someone were digging in my ribs with a shovel." "It feels as if there's a heavy rock on my chest."

Years ago as a doctor and more recently as a writer, I declared my faith in images—the human fact placed near a superhuman mystery, even if both are illusions of the senses. Diagnosis, like writing, calls for the imagination and the skill to discover things not seen, things that hide themselves under the shadow of natural objects. It is the purpose of the writer and the doctor to fix these unseen phenomena in words, thereby presenting to plain sight what did not actually exist until he arrived. Much as a footprint hides beneath a foot until a step is taken.

By using metaphor and imagery, the patient brings the doctor into a state of partial understanding of his pain. In order to express it fully, he would have to cry out in a language that is incomprehensible to anyone else. This language of pain has no consonants, but consists only of vowels: ow! aiee! oy! oh! These are the sounds the sufferer makes, each punctuated by grunts, hiccoughs, sobs, moans, gasps. It is a self-absorbed language that might have been the first ever uttered by prehistoric man. Perhaps it was learned from animals. These howled vowels have the eloquence of the wild, the uncivilized, the atavistic. Comprehension is instantaneous, despite the absence of what we call words. It is a mode of expression beyond normal language. Nor could it be made more passionate or revelatory by the most gifted writer. Not even by Shakespeare.

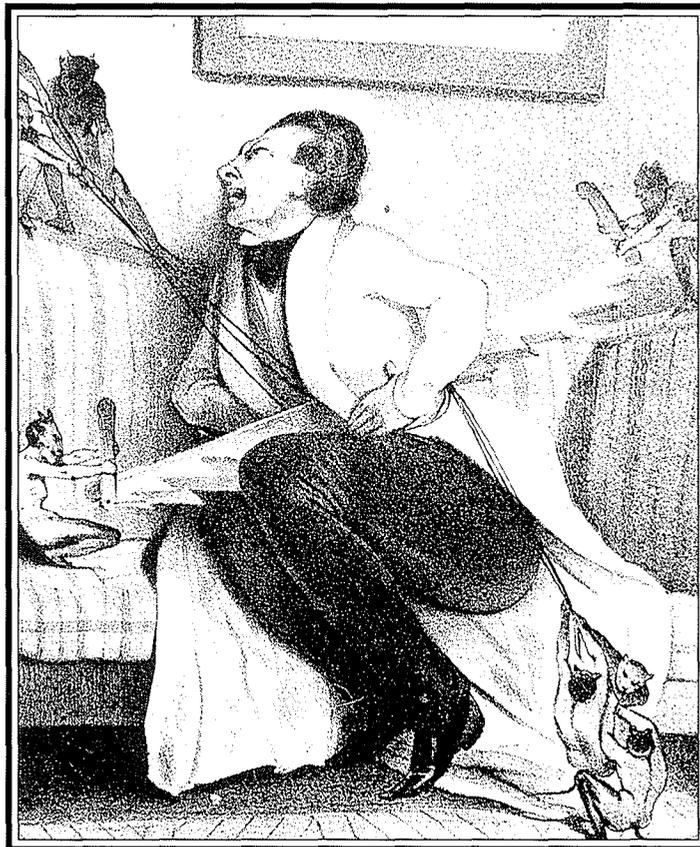
But what is the purpose of these cries of pain? Wouldn't silence be as eloquent? For one thing, the loud, unrestrained pouring forth of vowels is useful in attracting the

attention of anyone within earshot who might come to the assistance of the sufferer. Vowels carry farther than consonants and are easier to mouth, requiring only the widely opened jaws, without the more complex involvement of tongue, teeth, and palate that the speaking of consonants requires. Guiseppe Verdi knew that and made his librettist write lines full of easily singable vowels and diphthongs. It is the sung vowel that carries to the last row of La Scala. The consonants are often elided or faked by the singers who know that consonants are confined to the immediate vicinity of the stage and are altogether less able to be infused with emotive force. It comes as no surprise that the greatest opera singers are in the Italian repertoire—Italian, a language dripping with vowels and in which there is scarcely a word that does not end in one. “Mille serpi divoranmi il petto,” sings the anguished Alfredo upon learning of the sacrifice made by his beloved Violetta in *La Traviata*. The translation—“A thousand snakes are eating my breast”—simply won’t do.

One purpose of these cries of pain, then, might be to summon help, to notify fellow members of the tribe of one’s predicament so that they will come running. But I think there is more to it than that. For the sufferer, these outcries have a kind of magical property of their own, offering not only an outlet for the emotion but a means of letting out the pain. Hollering, all by itself, gives a measure of relief. To cry out ow! or aie! requires that the noise be carried away from the body on a cloud of warm, humid air that had been within the lungs of the

sufferer. The expulsion of this air, and with it, the sound, is an attempt to exteriorize the pain, to dispossess oneself of it, as though the vowels of pain were, in some magical way, the pain itself. It is not hard to see why the medieval church came to believe that a body, writhing and wracked and uttering unearthly, primitive cries, was possessed by devils. Faced with such a sufferer, authorities of the church deemed exorcism both necessary and compassionate.

**G**o ahead and holler,” says the nurse to the patient. “You’ll feel better. Don’t hold it in.” It is wise advice that has been passed down through the millennia of human suffering. But even these ululations cannot really convey to the reader what the sufferer is feeling, for they



*La Colique*, by Honoré Daumier (1833)

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are not literature. To write *ow* or *aiee* on a page is not an art. The language of pain, then, is the most exclusive of tongues, spoken and understood by an elite of one. Hearing it, we shudder, out of sympathy for the sufferer, but just as much out of the premonition that each of us shall know this language in our time. Our turn will come. It is a fact that within moments of having been relieved of this pain, sufferers are no longer fluent in this language. They have already forgotten it, all but an inkling or two, and are left with a vague sense of dread, a recollection that the pain was awful, a fear that it might return.

In lieu of language, the doctor seems to diagnose by examining the body and its secretions—urine, blood, spinal fluid—and by using a number of ingenious photographic instruments. A last resort would be the laying open of the body for exploratory surgery. Fifty years ago, it was to the corpse that the doctor went for answers. Ironic that life should have provided concealment and death be revelatory. Even now, it is only in the autopsy room that the true courage of the human body is apparent, the way it carries on in the face of all odds: arteriosclerosis, calculi, pulmonary fibrosis, softening of the brain. And still the body goes on day after day, bearing its burdens, if not jauntily, at least with acceptance and obedience until at last it must sink beneath the weight of those burdens and come to the morgue where its faithfulness can be observed and granted homage.

**T**here is about pain that which exhilarates even as it appalls, as Emily Dickinson has written. Pain is the expression of the dark underside of the body. As such, the sight of the wound, the sound of the outcry it produces, stir the imagination in a way that pleasure never can. We are drawn to the vicinity of pain by the hint of danger and death, as much as by the human desire to compare our fortunate state to that

of those unluckier. Then, too, there is the undeniable relation of pain and beauty, brought to artistic flower during the Renaissance and later by the 19th-century Romantic poets. It is the writhen Christ slumping on the cross that is the emblematic vision of pain from which has come the word *excruating*. It was Christianity that first tried to wrest meaning from pain. "Offer it up," say the Catholics, as if suffering, boredom, or even annoyance were currency to be paid on the road to sanctity. Simone Weil turned affliction into evidence of God's tenderness. Affliction is love, she wrote. To some, this represents a perversion of the senses, not unlike the masochism that welcomes pain as pleasure. To welcome pain as an approach to God is to negate mercy as proof of His love for human beings. It is an elite band of saints that can achieve ecstasy through pain. Even Christ cried out from the cross: *Why hast thou forsaken me?*

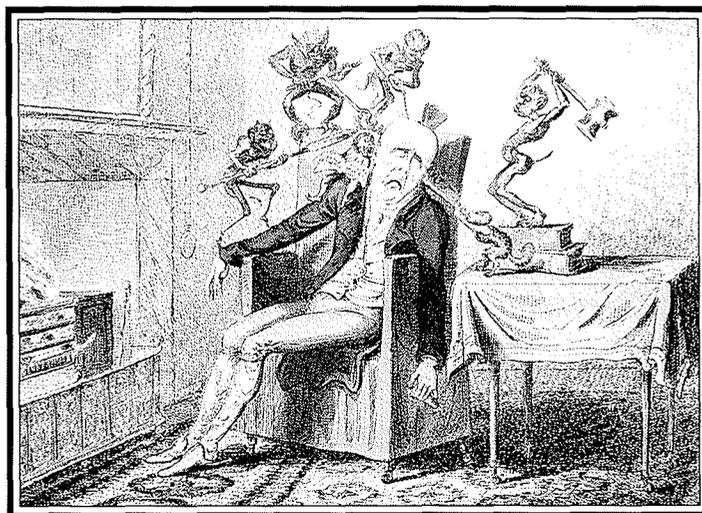
The artist who would prettify or soften the Crucifixion is missing the point. The aim was to kill horribly and to subject the victim to the utmost humiliation. It involved a preliminary whipping with the dreaded Roman *flagrum*, a leather whip with three tails. At the tip of each tail there was tied a small dumbbell-shaped weight of iron or bone. With each lash of the whip, the three bits dug into the flesh. The victim was tied or chained to a post and two centurions stood on either side. The wounds extended around to the chest and abdomen. Profuse bleeding ensued. Then the condemned was beaten on the face with reeds so that his face was bruised, his nose broken. To ensure maximum humiliation, the cross was set up in a public place or on an elevation of land such as the hill of Calvary. In the case of Jesus, in order to deride him further and to mock his appellation of King of the Jews, a crown of thorns was placed on his brow. Jesus, weakened by a night of fasting and prayer, as well as by the flogging and the blood loss, was not

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*Richard Selzer, a retired professor of surgery at the Yale School of Medicine, is the author of Mortal Lessons (1976), Down from Troy (1992), and most recently Raising the Dead (1994). Copyright © 1994 by Richard Selzer.*

able to carry his own cross to the place of execution as the punishment required. Simon of Cyrene did it for him. Then Jesus' hands were nailed to the crosspiece, which was raised and set into a groove on the vertical piece. The height was approximately seven and a half feet. At one point, a Roman soldier hurled a spear that opened the wound in his side. To add to Christ's suffering, he was assailed by extreme thirst, as is usual in instances of severe blood loss and dehydration. Once, a disciple was able to reach up and give him a drink through a hollow straw. Death came slowly, from shock, both traumatic and hypovolemic, and from respiratory failure due to the difficulty of expelling air from the lungs in the upright and suspended position when the diaphragm does not easily rise.

I wonder whether man has not lost the ability to withstand pain, what with the proliferation of pain-killing drugs and anesthetic agents. Physical pain has become a once-in-a-while experience for most of the industrialized world. Resistance to pain, like any other unused talent, atrophies, leaving one all the more vulnerable. What to a woman of the late 19th century might have been bearable is insupportable to her great-great-granddaughter. Still, for some, chronic pain is an old adversary, one whose cunning can be, if not negated, at least balanced, by hypnosis, acupuncture, biofeedback, exercise, practice of ritual, and other techniques not well understood. There is that pain which cannot be relieved by any means short of death and which must be lived *against*. Such was the pain of Montaigne who, tortured by bladder stones that occluded the outflow of urine, had to write *against* the pain. On the other hand, Aristotle was unable to philosophize because of his toothache.



The Headache, by George Cruikshank (1835)

Is the pain experienced in a dream any less than the pain experienced while awake? I think it is not. I have a dream that has recurred many times: I am standing alone in the middle of a great empty amphitheater. It is midnight and the scene is bathed in bluish moonlight. The city is European; Milan, I think. At either end of the amphitheater, a statue stands upon a marble pedestal. One is of Caesar wearing a toga and holding up a sheaf of wheat. The other is a great marble tiger. All at once, the tiger stirs, rises to its feet, then rears as if to spring. Yes, it is about to spring! I turn to run in the opposite direction, toward Caesar, but my feet are heavy, so heavy that I cannot lift them. Already I can sense the nearness of the beast, feel its hot breath upon my neck. A moment later there is the pressure of its fangs in the supraclavicular fossa on the left—and again in the nape. And there is pain. I look down to see my shadow bearing the burden of the huge cat on its back. At that instant, I wake up. My heart is pounding; I am gasping; the bed is drenched with sweat. And in the left side of my neck there is pain as if that area had been badly bruised. The pressure of my fingers intensifies the pain that I have brought back with me from the dream, the pain that has crossed from dream to wake-

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fulness. Slowly, my pulse returns to normal; the pain dissipates and I begin to regain a measure of equanimity. But only a measure, for I know that I shall have this dream again, that its pain and horror will be undiminished.

**L**ying there in the ecstasy of having survived, I wonder: Had I died in the jaws of that tiger, died of a heart attack or sudden arrhythmia, died of fright, doubtless my next of kin would comfort themselves with the knowledge that I had died peacefully in my sleep. "He died the death of a righteous man," they would murmur to one another. Had I the breath for it, I would sit up in the coffin and shout: "No! No! It wasn't like that at all!"

Pain. The very word carries its own linguistic baggage, coming down to us from the Latin *poena*—punishment. It is the penalty for misdeeds; one is placed in a penitentiary and made to do penance. The pain of childbirth was inflicted upon Eve for her act of disobedience, and from her upon all those who follow. Immediately upon delivery of her young, a woman begins to distance herself from the pain which she experienced during childbirth. Such forgetfulness is nature's way of assuring the continuation of the human race.

It is at the very least curious that Milton in *Paradise Lost*, reinventing the birth of Eve, has the masculine effrontery to anesthetize Adam during the rib resection. In Book 8, Adam has just finished telling God of his



Who Will Listen to My Pain? by Harry Wilson (1993)

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loneliness, his sense of incompleteness. God has promised the solution. Here is Adam describing the birth of Eve:

Dazzl'd and spent, sunk down, [I] sought  
repair  
Of sleep, which instantly fell on me, call'd  
By Nature as in aid, and clos'd mine eyes.  
Mine eyes he clos'd, but op'n left the Cell  
Of Fancy my internal sight, by which  
Abstract as in a trance methought I saw,  
Though sleeping where I lay, and saw the shape  
Still glorious before whom awake I stood;  
Who stooping op'n'd my left side,  
and took  
From thence a Rib, with cordial spirits warm,  
And Life-blood streaming fresh; wide  
was the wound,  
But suddenly with flesh fill'd up and  
heal'd:  
The Rib he form'd and fashion'd with  
his hands;  
Under his forming hands a Creature grew,  
Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair. . . .

Milton's act of anesthesia is evidence, if any further were needed, that a man cannot imagine, nor can he admit, the pain of giving birth. It is outside the precincts of his understanding. Had *Paradise Lost* been written by a woman, doubtless Adam would have felt each and every twinge.

Many is the writer who has tried to make the reader *feel* pain in a fictional character. I among them, in this passage from an essay on the subject of kidney stones:

Whom the stone grips is transformed in one instant from man to shark; and like the shark that must remain in perpetual motion, fins and tail moving lest it sink to terrible black depths of pressure, so the harbinger of stone writhes and twists, bending and unbending in ceaseless turmoil. Now he straightens, stretches his limbs, only to draw them upon his trunk

the next moment and fling his body from one side to the other, finding ease in neither. From between his teeth come sounds so primitive as to trigger the skin to creep. He shudders and vomits as though to cast forth the rock that grinds within. He would sell his birthright, forfeit his honor, his name, even kill to rid him of it. He toils in bed, pronged and spiked from within. Seed pearls of sweat break upon his face. In a moment his hair is heavy with it. His fingers scrabble against the bed, the wall, his own flesh to tear relief from these surfaces. But it does not pass. The impacted stone cannot push through into the lake, and from there voided. Like some terrible work of art, insatiable it screams to be extruded, let out into the air and light so as to be seen, touched, venerated. Never mind that the very act of deliverance will tear apart its creator.

At last he is able to force a few drops of bloody urine and the pain subsides. The stone has fallen away from the point of impaction, washed loose into the bladder. He is miraculously free of the pain. It is no less than being touched by the hand of God. Still, he is afraid to move lest the lightest change of position should sink the craggy thing into some new part and the hell be reenacted. It has not passed. It lies within him yet, malevolent, scorpoid. It is only a matter of time before the beast will rise again.

Does this convey the pain of colic? I think it does not. No matter the metaphor and simile, all the pomp of language falls short in transmitting pain, that private corporeal experience, to the reader. It is beyond the reach of words; it is subverbal. Just as well, for to convey pain exactly would be to relieve it and to suffer anew. In the matter of pain, it is better to experience it metaphorically than to know it directly.



*Oppenheimer, testifying before the Senate military affairs committee in October 1945, voiced his fears about the destructive potential of the atomic bomb.*

# OPPENHEIMER INVESTIGATED

BY ROBERT ERWIN

*Thirty-eight years old when appointed head of the Los Alamos Laboratory, J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904–67) became one of the more astute strategic thinkers about the nuclear age he helped to create. After facing charges of disloyalty—charges as groundless as ones recently made in the much-publicized memoirs of a former KGB general—Oppenheimer lost influence in the highest circles of government. But as Robert Erwin shows, this was far less a tragedy for the brilliant “outsider” than it was for the nation he served.*

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**S**pecial Tasks, the recently published memoirs of Pavel Anatolievich Sudoplatov, has once again brought into question the reputation of J. Robert Oppenheimer. The author, an 87-year-old former Stalinist "spymaster," alleges that not only Oppenheimer but also physicists Niels Bohr, Enrico Fermi, George Gamow, and Leo Szilard passed the "secrets" of the atom bomb to Moscow in the 1940s, purportedly in hopes of creating a balance of power that would discourage nuclear war. No proof is offered in the book. Shortly after its publication, two historians queried by the *New York Times* described the "revelations"—reprinted in *Time* last April with no cautionary words from the editors—as hearsay laced with error. More or less the same has since been said by a host of specialists knowledgeable about the period.

If the accusations leveled against Oppenheimer in *Special Tasks* were the most sensational ever made, they were certainly not the first. Oppenheimer was called many things during his career—pinko, egghead, rule-breaker, brilliant, special breed. Just about the only thing no one ever called him was average. That would have been preposterous.

To begin with, he was born into an enclave set apart from ordinary American values and tastes. His father, Julius, came to New York from Germany in 1888, a gawky 17-year-old who spoke little English. By age 30 he had become a prosperous cloth importer and had married a talented painter, Ella Friedman, from the Baltimore Jewish gentry. Julius's good fortune—he had further increased his wealth through wise investments—exemplified one kind of American success story, but, once established, he modeled himself on the liberal, cultivated wing of the European bourgeoisie, who took it for granted that poets and scientists should be depicted on postage stamps in a civilized country. Unlike American patricians such as Theodore Roosevelt, he had no intention of roughing it. Neither was he inclined to carouse, with the Newport set or anybody else. His son's friends remembered him as immaculately dressed, and his

employees characterized him as a proper gentleman.

Robert grew up insulated by money from a good deal of ordinary experience and at ease with high culture. At the country house on Long Island a yacht with a captain was kept for the parents, while Robert and his younger brother, Frank, were given a sloop of their own to sail. Cézannes hung on the walls at home in Manhattan, dusted by servants. From his mother, who taught painting in her own studio, Robert acquired an un-American attitude toward the arts. Art was not a classroom frill or an uplifting pastime, but instead something to be relished and absorbed as preparation for works of one's own.

**J**ewishness likewise put the Oppenheimers at an angle to mainstream America. The parents were not deeply interested in Jewish tradition. They sent Robert to the Ethical Culture School, on whose board Julius sat for several years. Yet they could hardly overlook anti-Semitism, quite open and virulent among much of the populace at that time and more discreet but virtually official among the genteel. The physicist Percy Bridgman, who respected Robert's outstanding record at Harvard and who pushed hard to get him admitted to Cambridge University for graduate study, deemed it necessary in a letter of recommendation to say: "As appears from his name, Oppenheimer is a Jew, but entirely without the usual qualifications of his race. He is a tall, well set-up young man with a rather engaging diffidence of manner. . . ." In other words, don't worry, chaps, this one is not obnoxious.

Oppenheimer's first crossings of the border between his enclave and the rest of the world produced a certain comedy and light pathos. Initially driven everywhere on his father's orders, he arrived at the Ethical Culture School at the last minute each morning and waited as long as it took for the chronically slow and overtaxed elevator to arrive at the ground floor. An exasperated headmaster wrote to his parents: "Please teach your son to

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walk upstairs; he is holding up class." As a graduate student in Europe in the late 1920s Oppenheimer was embarrassed when fellow students noticed the expensive clothes and fine luggage he took for granted. He sometimes offered his possessions to those who remarked favorably on them.

Studiousness in the ordinary sense understates Oppenheimer's bravura intellectual performance. By far the youngest member ever admitted, he presented a paper to the New York Mineralogical Club at the age of 12. Upon entering Harvard in 1922, he made it a habit to carry four or five courses per semester for credit and audit two or three more for stimulation. In terms of effort, he made little distinction between the two—teaching himself rudiments of Italian, for example, to drop in at lectures on Dante—and afterwards without a transcript before him could not remember which courses counted toward a degree. At first a chemistry major, he caught wind of the revolution in atomic theory and started reading physics on the side. Satisfied that he had mastered the reading list he showed them, the physics department permitted him to skip the elementary course and enroll at an advanced level.

Before Oppenheimer completed graduate work at the University of Göttingen he was writing to Professor Bridgman as though this former Harvard mentor were a country cousin who had to be brought abreast. Your theory of metallic conduction, he told Bridgman, might

benefit from Niels Bohr's conjecture—which he explained at length—that "when an electron jumps from one atom to another the two atoms exchange momentum."

Between second grade and the Ph.D., Oppenheimer apparently experienced only one period of sustained unhappiness and failure: the 1925–26 academic year at Cambridge University. If the dons noticed him at all, they marked him down as an obscure American of no particular promise. By midyear some fellow students felt he was close to cracking up from self-doubts and sexual frustration. Three acquaintances who traveled in Sardinia with him on holiday were baffled by his allusions to preparing a poisoned apple for someone, unsure whether to interpret his remarks as an incoherent metaphor, a sign of delusion, or a veiled reference to some actual harm he meant to do.

The ultimate cause of Oppenheimer's floundering may never be known, but there is a clue as to what put him back on stride when in 1927 he transferred to Göttingen. In his own words, "Something which for me more than most people is important began to take place: namely I began to have some conversations." By this he meant that world-class physicists such as Werner Heisenberg and Wolfgang Pauli had started taking him seriously. When he finished at Göttingen in 1929, Oppenheimer in the opinion of the faculty had done more than meet requirements. (Or less—he was careless about



*Julius and Robert Oppenheimer*

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*Robert Erwin is the former director of the University of Pennsylvania Press and the editor of publications at the Harvard Center for International Affairs. He is the author of The Great Language Panic and Other Essays and is at work on a collection of essays entitled Thinking Americans. Copyright © 1994 by Robert Erwin.*

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filling out enrollment forms and such.) By virtue of improving the method for calculating the opacity of a star's surface in relation to its internal radiation, his principal project in Germany, he became a practicing scientist.

Oppenheimer's next step in making his own way was to head for California, psychologically remote for many Americans then. To preserve his newly acquired identity as a physicist in that distant outpost, he arranged for a dual appointment. As a faculty member at the University of California at Berkeley he organized the teaching of nuclear theory from scratch. Simultaneously he held a faculty position at the California Institute of Technology, where advanced work was under way and he would rub against minds as sharp as his own.

He did indeed flourish as a physicist during the 12-year California period. He and one of his students identified what is still known as the Oppenheimer-Phillips process: When a deuteron (formed from a proton and a neutron) bombards an atomic nucleus, the proton goes its separate way while the nucleus captures the neutron and becomes a new radioactive atom. Among physicists his own age or a little older, there was a fair amount of agreement that during the 1930s he showed a great gift for seeing fruitful connections between theoretical insights and experimental projects that had not yet occurred to those doing the work.

Giving courses was a new venture for Oppenheimer, in spite of the prodigious number he had taken. Reportedly he was stiff and ineffectual for the first two or three years, then got the hang of it. According to Robert Serber, an early protégé, "Oppie occasionally had difficulty in dissuading students from coming a third or fourth time" to his Berkeley course on quantum mechanics. Glenn Seaborg, the eventual discoverer of plutonium, remembered Oppenheimer answering questions faster than students could articulate them: "In this respect, I recall taking great pains in formulating my questions to him in such a way that I could put the main thrust of my thoughts as

early as possible into every sentence."

In this period, too, Oppenheimer flourished as an outdoorsman on a small ranch he had acquired in the Pecos Valley of New Mexico, an area he had enjoyed on vacations as a teenager. Katherine Page, a New Mexico friend, christened the ranch Perro Caliente because when she telephoned Oppenheimer to tell him it was available, he responded, "Hot dog!" At Perro Caliente, which in the beginning had no plumbing, he converted from his father's European taste to the American model of the intellectual who is also "rugged." The same values in effect had sent Francis Parkman to camp with the Sioux, Theodore Roosevelt to ride with the cowboys, and William James to climb Mount Chocorua. By several accounts Oppenheimer became an excellent horseman who made long loops through the high desert without getting lost. He also came to fancy himself a prime chili cook.

Evidently during the California period Oppenheimer rid himself of his juvenile awkwardness toward women. He was engaged for a while to Jean Tatlock, an ardent leftist, and in 1941 he married Kitty Harrison, a biologist and the widow of a communist killed in Spain. (He and Harrison would have two children.)

Not everything changed. He kept his autodidactic habits: read Sanskrit classics in translation and Plato in Greek, delved into psychoanalytic theory, and sampled avant-garde fiction. One evening shortly before World War II, listening to Mozart recordings with Kitty and a couple who shared their concern for the cause of the Spanish loyalists, Oppenheimer suddenly proposed that the 24th Piano Concerto "would make a wonderful revolutionary song." He continued to strive for the right attitude about having money and sharing it—frequently treating students to dinner at expensive restaurants in the spirit of a party rather than a handout. He quietly contributed to a fund for the relocation of Jewish professors thrown out by the Nazis.

Possibly the best thing California did for

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Oppenheimer was to broaden his interest in social and political affairs. The idea of basing a society on cooperation rather than competition struck him as a fresh approach. He explored the proletarian novel, joined a teachers union, spoke on behalf of the Spanish loyalists. It could be argued that this came too easily at the time and cost him too dearly later. When, for example, he wrote a contemptuous letter about sanctimonious equivocation and Red-baiting to one F. R. Coudert, Jr., member of a prewar "loyalty" committee, the press, the public, and the politicians took no notice. They had never heard of Oppenheimer, did not know a neutron from a fig newton. At the same time his gesture was automatically applauded by the only circle that mattered to him then. But when those who favored an arms race set out to pull him down in the 1950s, his California record was doubly useful to them—to impugn him personally and to divert attention from his ideas on national policy. In his own mind he was sure that the California experience had been permanently good for him. Certainly it was relaxed and benign compared with what came next.

**F**rom 1942 to 1946, Oppenheimer directed the Los Alamos Laboratory, which drew upon hypotheses and experiments within the Manhattan Project as a whole to create an actual weapon. Los Alamos constructed the atomic bombs dropped on Japan—deliverable, reliable as a machine, more destructive than anything humans had ever made. In an isolated encampment 60 miles from the nearest railhead, Oppenheimer kept 1,500 anxious people at work on this unnerving task. For a long time the people in this bizarre setting were not sure the devastating weapon they believed they needed to save themselves in a world war could be built; but perhaps so much the worse for them if it could, because the Nazis might build it first. Some who at first feared failure came to dread success, when the deadly work continued *after* Germany surrendered.

Los Alamos cast Oppenheimer in yet an-

other new role. Though he was not naive enough to think that a rigid line separated academia and disinterested rationality on the one side from politics and power struggles on the other, his position at Los Alamos pushed him a long way toward the latter concerns. As before, however, a change of venue did not change his mind about the primacy of intellect. He did not wish to become someone else (exposure to California and now to executive privilege notwithstanding), and he did not believe that words such as "practical" and "realistic" exempted any part of human experience from moral reasoning. While the army clamored to get rolling, he had taken time to estimate the odds of accidentally starting a chain reaction that would burn the earth's atmosphere. Later, in 1948, a year before the Soviet Union successfully tested a fission bomb, while a good many Americans assumed their country had the power and moral superiority to police the world indefinitely, he wrote one of the defining statements of the nuclear age: "In some sort of crude sense which no vulgarity, no humor, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin."

Nothing displays Oppenheimer's intellectual breadth better than setting the above quotation next to the government's reasons for choosing him to run Los Alamos. His reputation for bridging theoretical and experimental physics appealed to the can-do spirit of the armed forces. For example, he had moved readily from Niels Bohr's purely scientific conjecture in the 1930s that U-235 is the fissile isotope of uranium to his own problem-solving estimate in 1941 of the amount of U-235 necessary for an effective weapon. Yet military types did not understand how many bridges he maintained and how frequently he passed back and forth across them in everything he undertook. No problematics and no question of moral cost and error should ever be shirked, he believed.

Another factor that made Oppenheimer a plausible candidate to run Los Alamos was his familiarity with the peculiarly American kind

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of organization promoted by James Conant of Harvard and Vannevar Bush of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. McGeorge Bundy recently explained the appeal of this model in a society with very limited experience in collective intellectual effort:

Instead of working toward the establishment of government laboratories or the mobilization of scientists in uniform [Bush] established a pattern of contract work at universities and research centers; the contracts were not with individuals but with institutions, and they thus allowed for activity at any desired level of magnitude and complexity.

Although located in New Mexico, Los Alamos Laboratory technically was set up as a unit of the University of California.

Having picked Oppenheimer for their own reasons, the authorities got their money's worth. In 1943, because the War Department was now paying him \$10,000 a year, he asked the university to cut his salary by \$200 per month. Work done "for the Government of the United States in time of war," he wrote, should not be "the occasion for any essential increase in income." American scientists, sought by competing agencies all claiming their programs were vital, had a wide choice as to how they would contribute to the war effort. In recruiting staff, Oppenheimer competed successfully with one hand tied behind his back. He was allowed to tell them they would have to leave home and friends and live indefinitely at an isolated installation, but he was not permitted to tell them what they would be working on. After the war, a writer who analyzed Los Alamos (originally planned to be a tenth the size it actually attained) remarked on the director's success at soothing frustrations and correcting errors.

By his own standards, too, Oppen-

heimer performed well at Los Alamos. Without shirking a heavy administrative load, he managed to attend most of the seminars from which promising ideas emerged, as well as be present in the labs when crucial measurements were made. Over the objections of a series of security officers, he insisted that all colloquia at Los Alamos be open to every staff member with academic credentials. His reasoning, according to the physicist Victor Weisskopf, was "that each one must know the whole thing . . . to be creative." The army would have been satisfied to make Oppenheimer chief scientist and put overall management in other hands, but he wished to manage. Not only did he do well at recruiting and at giving way on lesser issues so as to win big ones, he



*Oppenheimer and Major General Leslie Groves at Ground Zero*

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also quickly learned how to take care of his people. In the midst of scientific, organizational, and logistical quandaries while Los Alamos arose, he saw to it that fireplaces and large closets went into the plans for staff housing.

Unfortunately for his future effectiveness, he did not observe carefully how high-stakes politics are played. Leo Szilard, who with Enrico Fermi at the University of Chicago had developed the first self-sustained nuclear reactor based on uranium fission, collected signatures from 67 prominent scientists on a petition asking President Truman not to drop the bomb before warning the Japanese and offering them a last chance to surrender. What happened next should have forewarned Oppenheimer of the slick tricks that would be pulled on him in the years ahead. General Leslie Groves, military overseer of the Manhattan Project routed the document so that it would reach Washington after Truman left for the Potsdam Conference. The president never saw the petition.

**F**rom 1946 until illness forced him to resign shortly before his death in 1967, Oppenheimer directed the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J. Because he spent a great deal of time counseling the government on nuclear weapons and world politics, facing insinuations of disloyalty, and appealing to the public not to support an arms race, some writers presume that he was an absentee director as far as the institute was concerned. After Cold War zealots excluded him from policymaking circles in 1954, he supposedly contributed a tweedy, forlorn, and mainly ceremonial presence in Princeton. Because of these alleged circumstances and because he wrote no physics papers after the war, a misconception lingers that he left science to become a Public Man and ended as a Broken Man.

Yet to mope or to give up old interests just because he was cultivating new ones would have been foreign to Oppenheimer. His way was to expand and consolidate, not to hop from one rock to another.

In science he kept up well enough. From 1948 to 1950 he personally participated in research on detecting nuclear explosions. With his old feel for where the next advance in physics would occur, he brought to the Institute for Advanced Study T. D. Lee and C. N. Yang, Nobel laureates in 1957 for their work in quantum mechanics. As theoretical particle physics separated itself as a subdiscipline from theoretical nuclear physics, the pioneering work was done at the institute. He considered Edward Teller, who had worked under him at Los Alamos, to be a desperate egomaniac. He thought the making of a fusion bomb (Teller's obsession) would be disastrous from the viewpoint of foreign policy, and was glad that for years Teller failed to come up with satisfactory design calculations. Instantly upon scrutinizing the mathematician Stan Ulam's solution to problems that had stymied Teller, however, he reacted as a passionate physicist. "That's it," he said. "Sweet and lovely and beautiful." Nor did he lose his Los Alamos gusto for taking care of his people. Deciding that the institute needed a new library, he hustled up the funds and saw to it that an ample facility was built.

During the Princeton period he did throw himself into advising policymakers. He sat on numerous government boards and committees, wrote a stack of memoranda, and met with generals, senators, cabinet officers, and a few times with presidents. This was indeed different from managing a laboratory, cooking chili, doing physics, or sailing a sloop in Long Island Sound. But it was no departure from his lifelong pattern of moving outward when a vista opened before him. Initially the wiser policymakers sought him. In 1945 he encouraged Secretary of War Henry Stimson to think less about hardware and more about the nature of international politics in a world of atomic weapons. In the opening days of the Cold War, Dean Acheson once observed, "the most stimulating and creative mind among us was Robert Oppenheimer's."

"Inside scientist" better represents Oppenheimer's position than the term "insider." For insiders, policies are negotiable or expendable.

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Staying in the loop and lining up with the winning side may count more than any policy. By contrast, Oppenheimer spoke the truth or named the most reasonable option as best he could perceive. Gradually he learned that some insiders despised him for this. Harry Truman called him a “crybaby scientist.” By reorganizing boards to which he had belonged, Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson undercut Oppenheimer’s “need to know” in 1953. Like settlers encroaching on Indians, opponents seized some things from him, destroyed the rest, and felt doubly good about it—because now they had what they wanted, and he didn’t deserve to have anything.

**T**he first skirmishes were fought over the issue of knowledge versus secrecy. Oppenheimer explained why on the basis of information already available to scientists everywhere the U.S. screen of secrecy would not stop the Soviet Union from making its own atom bomb soon. (It is now known that Stalin had already assigned hundreds to the project, a team headed by Igor Kurchatov, a physicist about Oppenheimer’s age.) When the Soviets exploded such a bomb in the fall of 1949, the Americans installed more locks and phone taps. Oppenheimer and other inside scientists forecast the Soviet hydrogen bomb—developed by 1953—with equal accuracy. During his six years as chair of the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission, he repeatedly argued that policies affecting the whole of humankind should not be decided in secrecy by a tiny elite. It was morally wrong, he felt, and would fuel protest movements.

Oppenheimer’s opinion appalled insiders such as Senator Tom Connally (D.-Texas). In the first place, American cultural rules forbade experts from making moral judgments without prior permission. Their job was to supply techniques and apparatus. More important, as an adjunct to policymakers operating in secret, Oppenheimer was objecting to a privilege they revered and for which they thought he should be grateful.

In Washington, Oppenheimer had his first prolonged encounter with expedient thinking. If you have no solution, deplore the problem:

—What should be done about Russian aggression in Eastern Europe, Senator?

—I am absolutely against Communism.

If a possible solution occurs to you, especially one that brings immediate career benefits, stop looking and identify purpose with results. Huge military appropriations could conceivably advance U.S. interests. Hence procurement is the same as an effective foreign policy.

More logical policymakers, Oppenheimer thought, would appeal to the self-interest of rivals. International control of the production of uranium and thorium, for example, might appeal to the Soviet government not because of its commitment to peace but because of its hope that something might thereby survive a war. Moreover, if the “realists” were wise, they would think about what it would actually take to fight with nuclear weapons. He was among the first, in 1945, to point out that “no military countermeasures will be found which will be adequately effective in preventing the delivery of atomic weapons” and that maximum destructiveness does not always make military sense. On this latter point President Eisenhower, an old soldier skeptical of one-weapon armies, agreed.

**I**deas akin to these eventually crept into the consciousness of policymakers: limited war and tactical weapons, strategic deterrence and the balance of terror, overkill, and arms limitation rather than disarmament. They came not through Oppenheimer but from “policy intellectuals” such as Henry Kissinger, less intelligent and more fawning than he.

Even while he was still in a possible position to affect decisions on the inside, Oppenheimer believed that government was never going to accept certain fundamental responsibilities. His reasons were fourfold. First, no national forum would be devised to air the big

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questions of the nuclear era in a collective rather than delegated way. What do we seek? What direction do we take? Politicians and bureaucrats would go on competing for power in the usual way through deals and slogans. To the extent that they controlled funds, laws, manpower, and publicity, they would continue to act as secretly as possible. Second, people were stunned by having won World War II partly through science, which they equated with nearsighted figures in white coats and "facts" certified forever in textbooks—a kind of science, moreover, that seemed to come from some alien realm outside the solid Newtonian world. Government had neither the ability nor the desire to make the new science comprehensible to them. Third, no warning would be given of the enormous side effects of an arms race on the economy. Fourth, powerlessness, ignorance, and unpleasant surprises would cause anxiety and wild suspicion. No remedy for social jitters was planned, and indeed no admission of the problem would be made by the authorities until the harm was done (as it turned out, till McCarthyism had ruined lives and divided the country).

**H**olding this view, Oppenheimer both before and after he lost his advisory status took it upon himself to educate the country. He was ill suited for a Socratic role, but he tried. During the 1950s and '60s he wrote six books and numerous magazine articles. He lectured. Politely if not gladly, he sometimes suffered journalists.

Oppenheimer assured the public that radiation in general is as natural a process as gravitational pull or condensation. Quantum physics, he was at pains to say, does not nullify the regular motion of visible bodies that everyone is used to. Atoms change from state to state within a range of statistical probability, not by "individually invariable mechanism." In the case of entities significantly larger than atoms, acting over distances great in comparison with the size of atoms, the averaging out of atomic flux stabilizes objects in conformity with Newtonian physics. Oppen-

heimer in particular sought to break the mental and circumstantial association of atomic energy with weapons. Start research for constructive applications, he urged. Push money and talent in that direction. Deliberately undercapitalize weapons research. (The State Department retaliated by omitting Oppenheimer's name and photograph from the Atoms for Peace Exhibit displayed around the world by the United States in 1955.)

**W**riting in *Foreign Affairs* in 1953, Oppenheimer nearly groaned in frustration over government secrecy: "I must tell [about the arms race] without revealing anything. I must reveal its nature without revealing anything." His position hindered his ability to talk openly about using an arms race as an excuse for imposing a garrison state in peacetime, replete with loyalty oaths, spy networks, and the large standing army that Americans had traditionally rejected. Participants in an arms race, he believed, design ever more destructive weapons, install them at a faster rate, and stockpile them in greater quantities than the national interest requires. The U.S. economy was bound to be skewed by an arms race—public finance, distribution of income, and allocation of plant, resources, and technical talent. "Security" would be used as a grand cover-up for machinations, blunders, payoffs, and high-handed actions. Finally, in his opinion, the combination of secrecy and fear, technological exuberance and hate, would cloud judgment and keep the public in a jumpy state of mind approaching wartime panic. As the result of an arms race, the world would be more dangerous and American society more oppressive than either had to be.

For this game but futile effort to reason with his fellow citizens Oppenheimer deserves everlasting moral credit. Instead, passionate feelings for and against him were misdirected into a legend about his showdown with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1954. Sympathizers awarded him the glory of martyrdom—an angel of peace ruined

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by the forces of evil. To those who chose the negative version, a foolish and wicked egg-head had been prevented in the nick of time from jeopardizing the survival of the Free World. In truth, Oppenheimer's AEC hearing was a case of dirty politics.

Upon becoming chair of the AEC in 1953, Lewis Strauss arranged for William L. Burden, former executive director of the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, to send a letter expressing doubts about Oppenheimer's loyalty to J. Edgar Hoover at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Once the letter was in the pipeline, Strauss reported to President Eisenhower that "charges of disloyalty" had been leveled, and he received an okay to cancel Oppenheimer's access to classified information until the matter was resolved. Then, in a letter dated December 23, 1953, the AEC notified Oppenheimer that his clearance would be withdrawn permanently in 30 days unless he requested a hearing before the agency's Personnel Security Board. "Undesirable" prewar associations and "influencing" some scientists not to work on the hydrogen bomb were mentioned, but these items were left vague, not alleged to be unlawful offenses. Strauss probably hoped there were skeletons in the closet that would make Oppenheimer take fright and leave quietly. Since the "accused" insisted on a hearing, however, which opened April 12, 1954, Strauss hired a tough prosecutor, Roger Robb, as the board's counsel. Yet Robb was handicapped by Oppenheimer's reputation and candor. A parade of top scientists, including Enrico Fermi, I. I. Rabi, and John von Neumann, testified to Oppenheimer's loyalty and outstanding service to the United States. It was hard to insinuate an impression of guilty secrets against a man who on a security questionnaire in 1942 had written that he belonged to "just about every Communist Front organization on the West Coast." When asked why he had lied in the 1940s about a conversation with his friend Haakon Chevalier, the leftist French professor at Berkeley, Oppenheimer replied, "Because I was an idiot."

The incident was the main card the AEC had

to play, but it wasn't very strong. Acting at the suggestion of a pro-Soviet engineer named George Elenton, Chevalier in 1943 approached Oppenheimer at a party about letting the Russian "allies" know what was going on at Los Alamos. Oppenheimer reported the overture to the government but altered the story to conceal his friend's identity. Later, when this altered version failed to hold up, he confessed to lying, gave his friend's name, and admitted to socializing with Chevalier during a visit to Paris after the war. Strauss played this card poorly. The government's own investigation confirmed that Oppenheimer had said no to Chevalier. That he voluntarily reported the approach in the first place, even in a distorted form, implied that he wanted the government to be vigilant. The AEC never determined whether Chevalier belonged to the Communist Party, and board members were nonplused by what Oppenheimer said the two men talked about in Paris—the current state of fiction. In their minds this was a tale so strange that it had to reflect a monstrous conspiracy for which there was no evidence, or it opened a peephole onto a realm of existence they did not know existed, where literature mattered.

Since nothing conclusive could be made to stick as the hearing ended on May 4, 1954, Strauss simply pushed Oppenheimer out the door by authorizing the security board to issue a statement on June 29 as arbitrary as a child's dislike of green beans: "We . . . have been unable to arrive at the conclusion that it would be clearly consistent with the security interests of the United States to reinstate Dr. Oppenheimer's clearance, and, therefore, we do not so recommend."

**T**hin as it was, this ruling succeeded because Eisenhower made no objection. Strauss, who had wangled an appointment as the president's special adviser on atomic energy affairs, saw to it that Ike did not talk to Oppenheimer or see the record of proceedings. Otherwise the president might have learned that a policy difference—over the size and character of the nuclear arsenal—and mutual personal ani-



Oppenheimer received the Fermi Award from Lyndon Johnson in 1963, shortly after John F. Kennedy's assassination. Oppenheimer died four years later.

mosity divided Strauss and Oppenheimer. Strauss led Eisenhower to think loyalty was the only issue.

Contrary to legend, Oppenheimer was not badly hurt by the board's decision. He continued to write and to direct the Institute for Advanced Study. He remained involved in the Rochester high-energy physics conferences he had helped to initiate. He kept most of his friends and admirers, including General Groves, and added a few who sympathized with his position. When a writer named Heimar Kipphardt based a very somber play on the transcript of the 1954 hearing, the real-life protagonist quipped that the author had "tried to convert a farce into a tragedy."

The notion that Lewis Strauss and his confederates were profoundly evil is indeed farcical. Strauss, whose idea of a lofty goal was to move up a notch or two in the Washington pecking order, hated Oppenheimer above all for joking in public about Strauss's ignorance of science. Evidently cooler players of the Washington game considered that Strauss's petty egotism and vindictiveness made him

unsuitable for the club. The Senate rejected his nomination for secretary of commerce in 1958, and he rapidly sank into obscurity. Pork-barrel politics and bureaucratic angling largely motivated the rest of Oppenheimer's enemies. Senator Brien McMahon (D.-Conn.) and other superpatriotic legislators liked brokering the many transactions generated by a gigantic military establishment. Defense contractors and hustling scientists naturally welcomed an arms buildup. Bureaucrats in and out of uniform coveted bigger appropriations and prestigious missions for their organizations. General Roscoe Wil-

son of the air force was particularly furious at Oppenheimer for opposing development of a nuclear-powered airplane, a project abandoned in 1960 after the expense of \$1 billion. Though perhaps J. Edgar Hoover truly believed in the Red Menace he was always conjuring up, what lesser employees in the security business found in a person such as Oppenheimer was raw material for steady work at good wages. Out of 4.7 million government workers screened between 1947 and 1952, 562 were dismissed on suspicion and no proven traitors were uncovered. Oppenheimer's case exemplified this white-collar featherbedding. The equivalent of all the federal taxes paid by roughly 200 prosperous American families for 13 years was spent on surveillance of him: for phone taps, field agents, record processing, and the like.

Handling the conflict as a whole, Strauss was like a drunken brawler, flailing about with fists, elbows, and knees but doing only moderate damage. Specifically with respect to the press, however, Strauss knew what he was doing. Editorial writers rejoiced in the security board's action as though a nasty child had received a well-deserved whipping. *Business*

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*Week*, for example, approved of punishing "scientists like Oppenheimer who feel competent enough to write their own rules of security behavior." *Newsweek* smugly quoted Edward Teller: "The person who makes the bombs is not quite the proper person to know what to do with them." The *Los Angeles Times* pronounced itself content with the humiliation of a man "who willfully broke the rules . . . as if they were not made for the special breed of which he is a member."

Oppenheimer never quite succeeded in turning popular opinion around in his favor or in coming fully to understand why he was scowled at. In part he misjudged the distance between himself and ordinary Americans who rejoiced at his comeuppance. Perhaps the strongest indicator of that distance was the fact that it never occurred to Oppenheimer to take to the airwaves or the tabloids. High cheekbones, classroom theatrics, and the floppy prospector's hat he affected during the California years suggested star potential. Yet he did not hire agents or image makers. Incredibly, he attempted to reach regular Americans through *books*.

Just as his opponents could not imagine what he and Chevalier would talk about if not treason, so Oppenheimer wondered why anyone should think of him as a reckless or sinister oddball. He could scarcely grasp the cultural prohibition against eggheads, as Strauss put it, "raising ethical rules." But whatever may be said about the need for rules and the need to break them, Oppenheimer's fate was supremely ironic. By most measures, he was an outsider. For the first 20 years of his adult life he read no newspapers or popular magazines, had no telephone in

his home. He was probably 40 years old before he realized that people meant it when they called his kind eggheads. Whereupon this outsider did something so important—build the atom bomb—that he entered the highest policymaking circles of what was then the most powerful nation on earth.

**T**hat was only for starters. The outsider proved to be smarter about realpolitik than the insiders. Of course take a strong stand against the Soviet Union, he agreed, but don't be stupid about it. Guard the national interest with a thousand fewer nuclear weapons in each camp. Don't tie up so much U.S. scientific and managerial talent unproductively. Don't waste resources competing in corners of the world where the United States has no vital interest. Don't imagine you are hurting our enemies by making schoolteachers sign loyalty oaths.

And then a final irony. Oppenheimer was shoved toward the outside again at a dangerous moment. All that is now lumped under the rubric of McCarthyism cost a number of people dearly. His brother Frank Oppenheimer, for instance, was fired by the University of Minnesota as a former Communist, and it took him 10 years to find another job teaching physics. In less time than that—in 1963, to be exact—Oppenheimer himself was invited back to the White House to receive a Fermi Award. His habit of making rules better than those handed out, a habit in which he persisted, infuriated some people. Others it charmed, because he assumed that everybody was like him, incessantly thinking.

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# THE GREAT AMERICAN JOB HUNT

*During the past dozen years, the U.S. economy has created vast numbers of new jobs. Not only have the usual newcomers and millions of immigrants found work, but unprecedented numbers of women have been accommodated as well. Yet "good" jobs—offering reasonable security and steadily rising pay—have become increasingly scarce. Jobs may be plentiful, but massive layoffs, stagnant incomes, and families struggling to get by on two paychecks make it hard to cheer. Our authors explain what is happening, and why. Paul Osterman surveys the prospects of the young. Paul Krugman examines the impact of new technology. Thomas Muller sizes up the effects of immigration.*

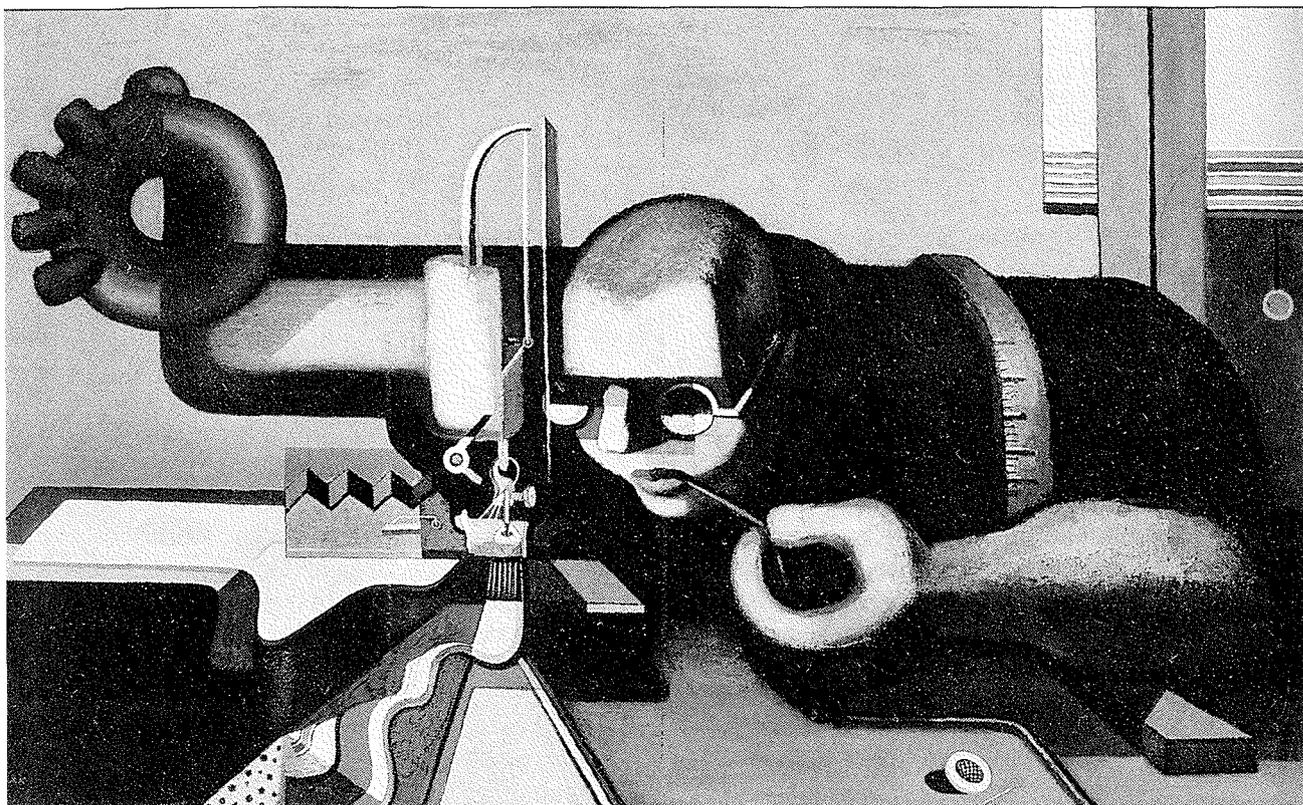
*Laura L. Nash considers the "virtual job" of the future.*

## GETTING STARTED

BY PAUL OSTERMAN

**W**e live in an age of anxiety about jobs, and perhaps the greatest anxiety is felt by young people searching for their first employment. All the other dangers and discontents of the world of work—from stagnant wages to insecurity bred by corporate "re-engineering"—seem to form a dark ceiling over those who are putting their feet on the lowest rungs of the ladder. Not only must today's young endure a larger-than-usual share of the uncertainties of starting out, but they must contemplate a future that

seems truncated and unpromising. The news media have cast them as an "edgy," cynical, and disheartened "Generation X," the first generation in American history, we are constantly told, that cannot look forward to a future better than its parents had. A staple of the Generation X story is the young person who invested in four years of college and yet finds himself in a job well below what he expected, both in terms of what it demands and what it pays. The *Washington Post* tells of college graduates forced to take unpaid internships because real jobs are unavailable. *Time* says it



Man at Machine, by Theodore Roszak

all in a headline: "Bellboys With B.A.'s."

There is a crisis among young people who are trying to get started in life, but it is not quite the crisis that the news media describe and its causes are not quite what one might expect. The facts simply do not support a terribly gloomy view of the immediate prospects for the middle-class, college-educated kids who are generally labeled Generation X. It is true that wage growth, an important part of the escalator of upward mobility, has slowed or ended, and it is far from certain that the old more-or-less automatic increases will resume. College-educated men aged 25 to 29, for example, earned an average of \$28,963 in 1992, roughly the same amount in real dollars as in 1983. (Their female peers, however, improved their earnings by a bit more than 10 percent.) But while average pay may not have increased, college grads still get good jobs, jobs

that give them responsibility, decent pay, room for a little creativity, and opportunities for advancement. In the boom years of 1984–86, about 47 percent of newly hired college grads in their twenties landed jobs in top-shelf occupations, as executives, managers, or professionals. The years 1989–91 saw a slight decline, to 45 percent, but this hardly represents a collapse of the job market. And another 40 percent of the 1989–91 crowd landed jobs in other desirable areas: technical work, sales, and administration, including jobs as various as air traffic controller, cashier, stockbroker, and ticket and reservations agent.

**S**low economic growth has increased the risks facing college graduates and ratcheted up their anxiety. On university campuses a more somber career-oriented atmosphere prevails, shock-



*Don't cry for today's college graduates. They may sometimes have trouble finding jobs, but they earn about \$9,000 more than high school graduates.*

ing the visiting journalists who came of age in sunnier and, some would say, dreamier days. It takes more time and more effort to get a good job, and often the pay is disappointing. Nonetheless these young people are still in relatively good shape.

The young people who face true difficulty are those with less education. They are in fact the great majority of young jobseekers. In 1992, only 23 percent of 25 to 29-year-olds had a college degree. Another 48 percent had some college or an associate's degree. Sixteen percent had only a high school diploma, and 13 percent lacked even that. In the past, there was a fairly reliable route that kids without college could follow. After high school and perhaps a year or two of college, they churned through a succession of less-than-desirable jobs before settling down. Instead of learning job skills in school, they went through an extended period of what economists call "labor market adjustment." They might work a string of jobs as retail clerks, construction workers, or unskilled factory hands, punctuated by short spells of more-or-less voluntary unemployment. Then, as now, many twentysomethings were not ready for permanent jobs. They

were mainly interested in earning some spending money for an apartment and a car and, perhaps, in having a little fun with their coworkers on the job. Few cared much what kind of job it was.

With age, maturity, and new family responsibilities later in their twenties, these people settled down into "adult jobs," but the paths they followed were many and varied. Credentials were less important than personal

contacts, and many found their adult jobs through the help of parents, relatives, and friends. The young man who followed his father into a particular factory or mine might not have been typical, but his informal way of getting started was. Uncle Bob might pull some strings for you at the union hall or Mom's best friend might tip you off to an opening in the billing office. This system, if it can be called that, succeeded for most people because jobs were plentiful and because most of the skills workers needed could be learned on the job. Today many young men and women cannot count on either the old routes or the old destinations. The factory likely is silent, the union hall half empty, and the help-wanted ads full of jobs requiring specialized skills. Ready to make the leap into adulthood, these young people find there is no obvious place to land.

The system still works for large numbers of high school graduates; most move gradually from "youth jobs" to "adult jobs." The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, which followed a group of young people between 1979 and 1988, offers a sharper picture of the problem areas. It found that 44 percent of 16 to 19-year-olds worked in wholesale or retail

*Paul Osterman is professor of human resources and management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is the author of Getting Started: The Youth Labor Market (1980), Internal Labor Markets (1984), Employment Futures: Reorganization, Dislocation, and Public Policy (1988), and co-author of The Mutual Gains Enterprise (Harvard Business School Press, forthcoming). Copyright © 1994 by Paul Osterman.*

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trade, which offers mostly low-paying and high-turnover positions. But by ages 29 to 31 the fraction employed in this sector was down to only 17 percent. Moreover, the study shows steadily growing work commitment among the young people. Only 3.5 percent of the oldest men in the study and four percent of the oldest women were unemployed at the time of the last interview. All of this suggests that the process of integrating the young into the workplace is going fairly well. Yet one also needs to know whether the jobs are steady and whether people are enjoying long stretches without unemployment. Here the news is more troubling. Among employed 29 to 31-year-old high school graduates who did not go to college, more than 30 percent had not been in their position for even a year. Another 12 percent had only one year of tenure. The pattern was much the same for women who had remained in the labor force for the four years prior to the survey. These are adults who, for a variety of reasons—a lack of skills, training, or disposition—have not managed to secure “adult” jobs.

For blacks and Latinos, the malfunctioning of the job market has reached a critical stage. In 1993, only 50 percent of young blacks between the ages of 16 and 24 who were not in school even had jobs. Among young Latinos the figure was 59 percent. By contrast, nearly three-quarters of their white counterparts had jobs. (A college degree significantly narrows but does not close the gaps. Ninety percent of white college graduates in the age group were employed, as were 82 percent of the black graduates and 85 percent of the Latinos.)

**Y**oung people in many other industrialized countries have a lot more help getting started. In Germany, virtually all students except the small number bound for universities spend the last three years of high school in an apprenticeship system that combines part-time schooling with training in factories, labs, and offices. For each of some 400 recognized occupations there is a standardized curriculum that specifies the

skills to be taught on the job and the content of schooling. The system is overseen by committees of representatives from government, business, and unions. After formal examinations at the end of high school, new graduates are placed in “adult” jobs, often with the company that trained them.

Not all German apprentices can find employment in their field; the Germans, a notoriously well-fed people, joke that they always seem somehow to turn out too many bakers. Yet inculcating the essentials of workplace behavior—be prompt, dress properly, follow instructions—is nearly as important a function of the system as teaching particular skills. The German system has other drawbacks. Women are still “gender tracked” into fields such as hairdressing, and the system can be slow to react to technological change in the workplace. Still the training and placement help German youngsters receive are far superior to what is available to their American peers.

In Japan, the process of launching the young into the world of work is not so highly organized as it is in Germany, but it is still far more structured than in the United States. Teachers maintain contacts with employers and play an important role in placing high school graduates. In Japan, as in Germany, the first job is a giant step into the work world. The years of casual, American-style “job shopping” are virtually unknown in these countries, and especially in Japan the young are expected to remain with their first employer for a long time. Yet if the American system is less orderly, it also provides much more freedom for the individual to experiment and change his or her mind—highly prized qualities that should not be lost in any attempt at reform.

**F**inding a steady job is only half the challenge of getting started. Finding one that pays relatively well is the second, and lately most daunting, hurdle. Pay for college graduates has at least stayed even over the years, but high school graduates and (especially) dropouts have lost a lot of ground. There now exists a huge

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## Does Job Training Work?

*If superior skills and education are the keys to success in the job market, then it may seem logical for government to underwrite job-training programs. Yet ambitious initiatives by the Clinton administration have been beaten back and scaled down in Congress. The skeptics' view is summarized by The Economist (March 12, 1994).*

Improved training is not the royal road to success in all places at all times. What works for a manufacturing-dominated economy like Germany does not necessarily work for a services-oriented economy like the United States. What works for computer makers does not necessarily work for discount stores. Heavy investment in training cannot compensate for poor management or misguided product strategies, as IBM has found to its cost.

What is more, low skills are not a sentence to unemployment, nor high skills a guarantee of job security. The United States still employs 1.5 times as many janitors as it does lawyers, accountants, investment bankers, stockbrokers, and computer programmers put together. Highly skilled people are losing their jobs as firms "de-layer" middle management and as the federal government cuts its defense budget. . . .

Above all, the pro-training camp hugely overstates the ability of training to curb long-term unemployment. For a growing number of people, particularly in the United States, the real problem lies not in a lack of job-specific skills but in a surplus of social pathologies—too many people with too little self-discipline, self-respect, and basic education to fit easily into any workplace. For another group, the problem lies with age. Most firms prefer 20-year-old recruits to 45-year-old ones because 20-year-olds usually cost less and because they are thought—rightly or wrongly—to be more flexible, more malleable, more likely to turn into "company men."

Even in a world without ageism or an underclass, there would still be huge problems in translating the vision of a "high-skills, high-wage economy" into practice. In theory, the case seems irrefutable for state intervention in the training market through company levies and national schemes; in practice, it is fraught with problems. Training levies, which oblige firms to train their workers or else pay a training tax to the government, squeeze small firms in unprofitable businesses and frequently end up subsidizing useless conferences. National schemes quickly crowd out private schemes, burdening the exchequer and limiting choice; and no scheme can be better than the people who run it, a standard which in practice is not always very high.

The assumption . . . that countries can borrow the

best bits of each other's training systems is also questionable. Training systems rely for their success on the structure of employment in the economy concerned and on the workings of a host of social institutions, informal as well as formal. Intent on producing the caretakers of a sophisticated manufacturing economy, the Germans put great emphasis on teaching the young how machines work, and how to fix them if they break down. But most new American jobs are in the service sector, requiring both social skills and familiarity with information technology.

The German system also depends on a set of social relationships which are entirely absent in the United States. Respected and well-coordinated business organizations allow employers to set national standards; stable shareholdings and long-term bank financing shield companies from some of the pressure for short-term profits. National collective bargaining makes poaching a rarity. Above all, the three members of the "social partnership" play a well-recognized part in making the system work, with employers devoting a proportion of their budgets to training, government providing vocational schools for young trainees, and trade unions moderating wages for new entrants into the labor market.

The Americans ought to be grateful that training systems travel so poorly, because both the German and the Japanese models are beginning to look somewhat tarnished. Although still immensely proud of apprenticeships in public, Germans are beginning to worry about them in private, whispering that a vital source of strength may one day become a fatal source of weakness. Some of these problems are short-term. Unification means that Germany has to find apprenticeships for large numbers of ill-educated and poorly motivated east Germans. The recession is making it hard for big firms, particularly in the car-making and metal-working industries, to afford to keep up their toll of apprenticeships, or to keep on those apprentices once they have spent 3 and 1/2 years training them. Last year, fewer than half of the metal industry's 130,000 apprentices managed to stay on in their firms.

Other problems, however, are deeper. First, apprenticeships are inflexible and antiquated, good at

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turning out skilled car workers but bad at producing software programmers or television producers. One result is that Germany has one of the least developed service sectors in Western Europe. Second, the system produces narrow specialists, intent on making their careers as machine engineers or production managers, whereas modern manufacturing techniques demand flexible generalists, capable of turning their hands to a wide range of jobs. In addition, it allows almost no room for retraining, assuming that workers will remain in the same jobs throughout their lives. Third, the system depends on a cooperative relationship with the trade unions, including worker representation on company boards and national wage agreements, which is coming under increasing strain. Worse still, the system is enormously expensive, helping to keep German labor the most expensive in the world. . . .

The Japanese system, which is based on a mixture of a broad, general education in school and prolonged on-the-job training thereafter, is also under unprecedented strain, thanks to the combined forces of recession and a new individualism among the young. The system requires two things to succeed: a guarantee of lifetime employment from the company, and a willingness on the part of the employee to sacrifice all for the firm. The guarantee of a long-term future with the company compensates workers for low starting wages, long hours, company-specific training and job rotation. It also gives them a broad mix of skills and a commanding knowledge of the company's strategy. Employee loyalty gives firms the confidence to invest heavily in training without fear of poaching, and the flexibility to move workers from product to product and place to place as the market demands.

In the short term, the biggest threat to this system comes from recession, with large firms cutting back on recruitment and introducing short-term contracts. In the longer term, however, the biggest threat may come from individualism, with more and more workers opting for higher salaries and individual freedom rather than a lifetime of subordination to a single master.

Surprisingly, the training system which seems to be coping best with technological innovation and global competition is the most maligned of the lot, the American one. The standard criticisms of this system, about poaching, short-termism, and amateurism, have always been overstated. Sensible workers do not

leave firms with good training records for fly-by-night operations just because they are offered a few dollars more. Successful firms take a long-term view of the skills of their work forces, even if they are subject to relentless hounding from the stock market to produce profits. Thanks to the pressure of competition, American plumbers, electricians, and pest controllers are usually as competent as their certificate-toting counterparts in Germany.

I ndeed, the American tradition of providing people with masses of general academic education, including a start at university for half the population and plenty of second chances for everyone, and leaving specific training to the market, is becoming more, rather than less, relevant. Economists have long argued that the returns on general education are higher than those on specific training, because education is transferable whereas many skills tend to be job-specific. Today, this case is becoming more compelling still as jobs become less secure, the service sector expands, the life-cycle of vocational skills diminishes, and the market puts an ever greater premium on the ability to deal with people and process information. The most urgent task facing the United States is to reform its highly uneven school system (perhaps through rigorous national exams) rather than to re-invent an apprenticeship system.

Moreover, a lot of American firms are proving to be remarkably flexible, innovative, and imaginative in their approach to on-the-job training. Shaken by the recession of the early 1980s, and impressed by Japan's capacity to mass-produce customized goods at extraordinary speed, large numbers of American firms are now taking training more seriously than ever.

When General Motors opened a new lorry factory in Fort Wayne, Indiana, it offered its 3,000 workers 633 hours of training each, in order to teach them how to handle new technology and work together in teams. Advanced Micro Devices, a circuit maker, allocates 40,000 hours and \$1 million a year to training its 400 employees. Quad/Graphics . . . treats all workers as "students," organizing them into six-person teams, providing them with "mentors," who are responsible for developing their skills, and giving them one day a week in the classroom.

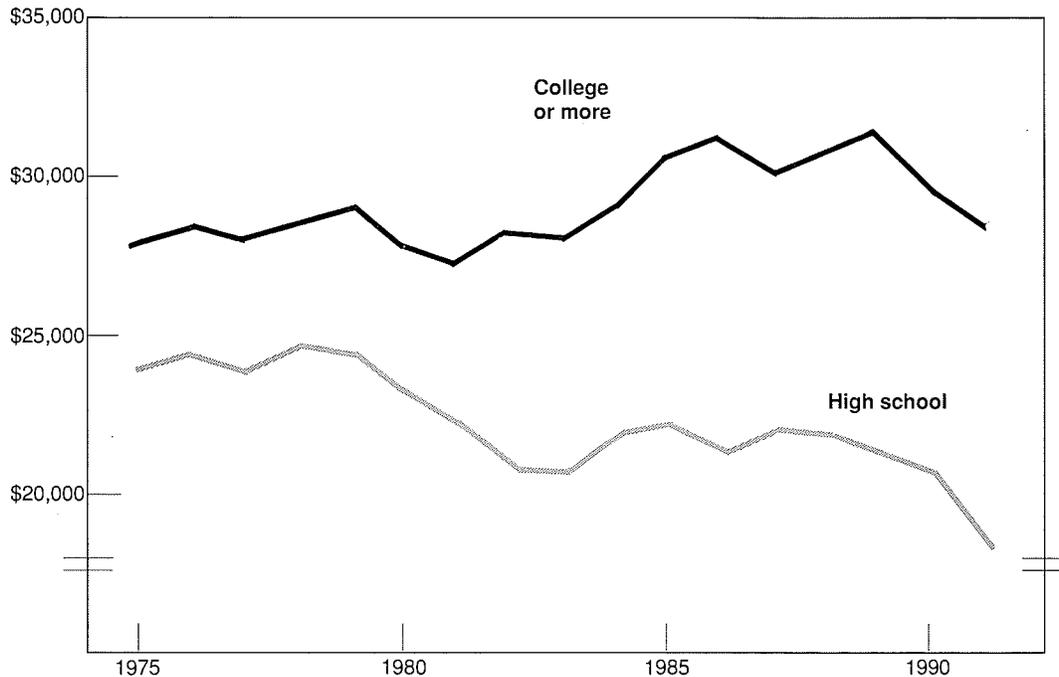
Clearly, there is much that other rich industrial countries can learn from the United States about the value of general education, the virtues of flexibility, and the desirability of local and corporate initiative.

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## A Tale of Two Degrees

(Annual Earnings of Men Aged 25 to 29, By Education, in Constant Dollars)



Source: Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census

pay gap between the college educated and their less fortunate peers. Between 1979 and 1991, the real wages of high school dropouts fell more than 20 percent, and the wages of high school graduates without college degrees fell more than 11 percent. People equipped with only a high school degree are finding it increasingly difficult to earn a decent living. According to a recent U.S. Census Bureau report, nearly half of all 18 to 24-year-olds who worked full time in 1992 still had annual incomes below \$14,335, the poverty line for a family of four.

The labor market is sending a clear signal. While the American way of moving youngsters from high school to the labor market may be imperfect, the chief problem is that, for many, even getting a job no longer guarantees a decent standard of living. More than ever, getting ahead, or even

keeping up, means staying in school longer.

While many things may have contributed to the erosion of wages over the past two decades, including the oft-cited influxes of cheap immigrant labor and cheap imported goods, the new premium on skills explains much of what has happened. When new technologies are combined with new ways of organizing work, such as team production or total quality management programs, the need for various kinds of skills rises. Today, employees are asked to understand and analyze certain kinds of data, to think about ways to improve the processes and products of the workplace, and to work with others to bring improvements about. No longer is it enough to perform rote tasks on an assembly line.

In part, employers are looking for better command of "hard" skills such as math,

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and the best evidence for this is the fact that they are willing to pay for such hard skills with hard cash. Economists Richard Murnane, John Willett, and Frank Levy recently found that, six years after graduation, members of the high school class of 1986 who had scored in the top third of a standardized math test were earning 16 percent more than those who had scored in the bottom third. In the class of '72, by contrast, top scorers enjoyed an edge of only five percent six years after graduation.

**T**his is a graphic illustration of the growth in demand for relatively simple math skills. And they are "relatively simple." Skills of this sort are not out of reach for most people. The question is whether the schools can do a good job of providing them. The answer is a little more textured than the bitter criticisms of political leaders and employers suggest. In fact, there is little reason to believe that schools are providing worse training than in the past. Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which declined during the 1970s, generally rose during the 1980s. Kids in most age groups scored slightly higher on most tests at the end of the '80s than they did in the early '70s. High school dropout rates have even improved a bit: In 1972, 16.1 percent of 19 to 20-year-olds lacked a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school. By 1991, that number was down to only 14.3 percent.

The real problem appears to be that jobs (and employers) are requiring ever-higher levels of skill, and that the schools, though moving slowly forward, are failing to keep up. Test scores have not declined, but they are not very impressive either. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, for example, offers the depressing claim that 30 percent of young people lack basic literacy skills (e.g., the ability to collect information from different parts of a document) and that 44 percent of 17-year-olds cannot compute with decimals, fractions, and percentages.

And while it is nice that dropout rates are not rising, they are still too high, especially among minority groups: 17 percent of young blacks and 36 percent of Latinos are dropouts.

Employers, moreover, are not simply looking for technical skills. The workplace of the 1990s, with its team-oriented approach and quality programs, requires people who are able to work cooperatively with others. They need good interpersonal skills. The same is true in the service sector—from fast-food restaurants to airlines—where there is a growing emphasis on pleasing the customer. When asked in a survey conducted by the National Association of Manufacturers why they rejected job applicants (more than one reason could be given), 37 percent of employers cited writing skills and 27 percent cited math skills, but 64 percent cited ability to adapt to the workplace.

Thus, despite all the talk of a "de-skilled" nation of hamburger flippers, the American labor market is demanding more and more skill. Although unskilled service-sector work has certainly grown, so has the quantity of more demanding work. Indeed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that between now and 2005 the occupational group with the fastest growth rate will be "professional specialty" jobs—such as engineering, the health-care professions, and teaching—almost all of which require at least some college. Growth in executive, administrative, managerial, and technical occupations will also be faster than average.

**I**t is important for those who would fix the American system to put aside utopian thoughts. Getting started will always be a difficult, anxiety-producing experience. Moreover, young people are and will continue to be marginalized in virtually every labor market in the world. Even Germany does this, albeit subtly, by placing them mostly in apprenticeships at small firms, where long-term career prospects are not good. Young people simply lack the skills and maturity of their elders, and in any

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## The Minimum Wage Debate

Until the Clinton administration took office last year, the federal minimum wage was largely a moot issue. Stuck at \$3.35 an hour during the 1980s, it was finally raised by 1989 legislation to \$4.25, still roughly \$1.50 less in real terms than it was in the 1970s. It was not only the opposition of a Republican White House that kept the minimum down until 1989, however, but the fact that economists generally agreed that increases in the minimum wage cost jobs.

Today the White House is occupied by a Democrat and the chief economist at the U.S. Department of Labor is one of the authors of intriguing new research that suggests that increases in the minimum wage are pain free. Economists Lawrence Katz, then of Harvard University, and Alan Kreuger of Princeton, looking at a collection of Burger Kings, Wendy's, and other fast food emporia in Texas, found that the increases actually *raised* employment a bit. (Perhaps, they reasoned, the old minimum was so low that the restaurants that offered it were not able to attract and keep enough employees.) Their study appeared in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (October 1992). It was accompanied by a report by David Card, also of Princeton, who compared employment in states that raised minimum wages before Washington did with those that did not. Card backed up Katz and Kreuger. Increasing the minimum put more money in the pockets of hamburger flippers and janitors without causing employers to trim jobs.

These challenges to the conventional wisdom have not gone unanswered. Other recent studies have confirmed the earlier view: A 10 percent increase in the minimum, they suggest, causes roughly a one to two percent loss in employment.

Meanwhile, many observers note that the minimum wage is not nearly so important as it once was. Because many employers increased wages on their own, the number of Americans working for the minimum wage or less dropped from eight million in 1980 to four million in 1993. That equals 6.6 percent of the labor force.

Moreover, a lot of those \$4.25-per-hour-and-under workers are teenagers from relatively affluent families working part-time for

pocket money. More than two-thirds of all minimum wage workers are part-timers, and the vast majority are single and without family responsibilities. Only about 20 percent live below the poverty line.

Since its inauguration in 1939, the minimum wage has been seen chiefly as a poverty-fighting tool—and by organized labor as a useful floor under wages. Today, critics argue, more effective antipoverty tools exist. In a study for the employer-backed Employment Policies Institute, for example, Richard Burkhauser of Syracuse University and Andrew Glenn of Vanderbilt University argue that upper-income households were the biggest beneficiaries of the 1989 minimum wage hike, reaping a bigger share of the estimated \$4.2 billion one-year income boost it produced than did poor and near-poor families. A much more effective way to help the working poor, Burkhauser and Glenn contend, is by expanding the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. If Congress had increased this tax break for low-income workers by \$4.2 billion in 1989, they estimate, poor and near-poor families would have captured two-thirds of the benefits.

The problem with this approach, of course, is that it would cost the U.S. Treasury \$4.2 billion. The minimum wage can be raised without directly increasing the federal budget deficit.

The bottom line, many economists seem to agree, is that a minimum wage increase of roughly 10 percent, as the Clinton administration has been contemplating, would be relatively harmless. At worst, it would cost 80,000 jobs. Without question, it would boost the pay of a full-time minimum wage worker, now earning \$8,840 annually, to around \$10,000. It might help some young people who are just starting out, and it would lift a number of families over the poverty line. But an increase to something like \$6 per hour, which organized labor reportedly favors, would be an entirely different issue.

In any event, the minimum wage once again seems largely a moot issue. As long as health-care reform, with its own potentially job-killing employer mandates, dominates the national agenda, there will not be much eagerness to risk raising the minimum.

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event it makes sense to reserve most good jobs for people with adult responsibilities.

Harkening to the German example, American policymakers have focused on the need to strengthen links between local schools and employers. The Clinton administration's new School to Work Opportunities Act, budgeted at \$100 million this year, encourages employers to provide on-the-job training and encourages schools to reformulate their curricula to include real-world examples that can be used both to motivate and to teach. The new "tech-prep" education, unlike the old vocational education, seeks to give teenagers serious instruction in traditional academic disciplines. The hope is that by appealing to a bigger slice of the teenage population, the low-prestige, second-rate taint of old-fashioned vocational education will be avoided. Making all of this work in the highly decentralized American system will be difficult. Individual school systems must be persuaded to rethink how material is taught. Without strong Euro-

pean-style employers' associations, there has to be firm-by-firm recruitment of "good" employers to train students and hire graduates. Still, the effort is well worth making.

Ultimately, however, helping the young find good jobs is more than a matter of tinkering with what happens to teenagers in school and on the job. One of the top requirements in today's job market is schooling beyond high school. This means that increased financial aid to help more youngsters attend college must be a high priority. Likewise, the employment problems of black and Latino youngsters owe much to a daunting array of larger urban ills, from crime to inferior education, for which narrowly focused programs—with the exception of the tiny Job Corps—have been unable to compensate. Overcoming this group's special problems will require large helpings of collective as well as individual ambition and initiative.

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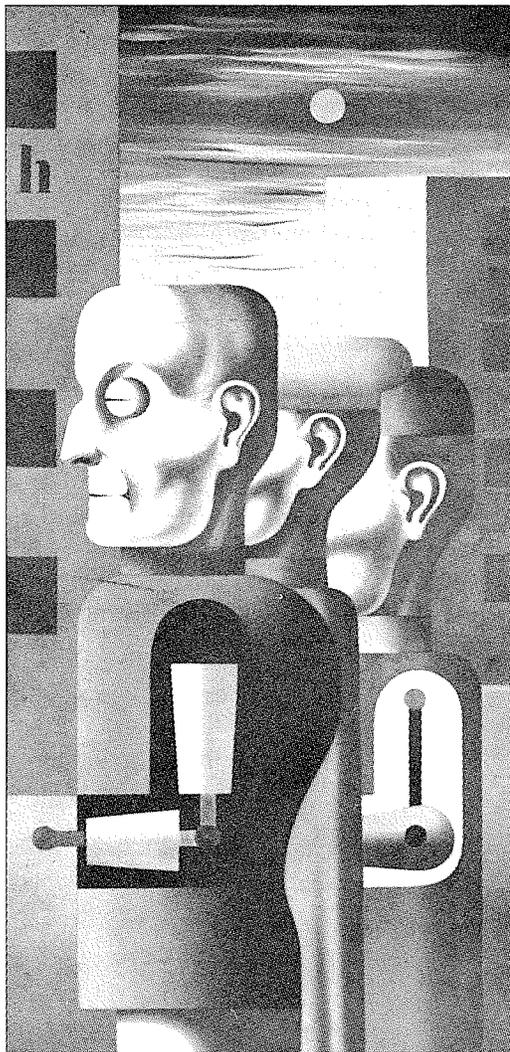
# TECHNOLOGY'S REVENGE

BY PAUL KRUGMAN

In his science-fiction novel of 1952, *Player Piano*, Kurt Vonnegut imagined a future in which the ingenuity of engineers has allowed machines to eliminate virtually all manual labor. The social consequences of this technological creativity, in his vision, are disastrous: Most people, instead of finding gainful employment, live on the dole or are employed in pointless government make-work programs. Only the most creative and talented can find meaningful work, and their numbers steadily shrink as more and more jobs are automated out of existence.

For the first 20 years after *Player Piano* appeared, it seemed that Vonnegut could not have been more wrong. Between World War II and the early 1970s, the world's advanced economies were spectacularly successful at creating precisely the kind of employment that he imagined automation would destroy: well-paying jobs for workers of average skills and education. Social observers waxed eloquent over the unprecedented prosperity of the working class. Thanks to the 30-year "Go-Getter Bourgeois business boom," writer Tom Wolfe announced, "the word *proletarian* can no longer be used in this country with a straight face." Economists, who had always regarded most fears about automation as nonsense, felt confirmed in their dismissal of the issue.

But the past 20 years have not been good ones for ordinary workers. Even as the earnings of many college-educated workers soared in the United States, young men



Maschinenmänner (1930), by Heinrich Hoerle

without college degrees have seen their real wages drop by 20 percent or more—this in spite of productivity growth which, while disappointing, nonetheless allowed the average American worker to produce about 25 percent more in 1993 than in 1973. In Europe, the growth of wage inequality has been less dramatic, but there has been a

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steady, seemingly inexorable rise in unemployment, from less than three percent in 1973 to more than 11 percent today (versus six percent in the United States).

Many economists believe that the American and European experiences are two sides of the same coin. For whatever reason, employers have been increasingly reluctant to pay for the services of those who do not offer something exceptional. In the United States, where unemployment benefits are relatively skimpy and of relatively short duration (26 weeks), and where the unemployed often find themselves without health insurance, workers have little choice but to accept jobs no matter how low the pay. Thus, U.S. labor markets have been, in the fine euphemism of official documents, "flexible." In Europe, much more generous social benefits make it easier for workers to turn down jobs they find unacceptable, and various government regulations and restrictions make employers less willing and able to offer low-wage jobs in any case. Thus, the same forces that lead to less pay for the less skilled in the United States lead to rising unemployment for the same group in Europe. The larger outcome is the same on both sides of the Atlantic: The broad equality of economic outcomes that the postwar West had come to take for granted seems to be receding into memory.

Most people who read intellectual magazines or watch public television know why this is happening. Growing international competition, especially from low-wage countries, is destroying the good manufacturing jobs that used to be the backbone of the working class. Unfortunately, what these people "know" happens to be flatly untrue. The real reason for rising wage inequality is subtler: Technological change since 1970 has increased the premium paid to highly skilled workers, from data processing specialists to physicians. The big question, of course, is whether this trend will continue.

Before we can get to that question, how-

ever, it is necessary to clear away some of the underbrush. Much public discussion of jobs—even among people who consider themselves sophisticated and well-informed—has been marked by basic misunderstandings of the facts. Consider this statement: "Modern technologies of transportation and communication make it possible to produce anything anywhere. This technological shrinking of the world has only been reinforced by the fall of communism, which has made the Third World safe for multinational corporations. As a result, a massive redeployment of capital and technology from the high-wage countries of the West to low-wage developing nations is now occurring. This redeployment of capital along with the flood of low-cost imports is destroying the well-paying manufacturing jobs that used to support a large middle class in the United States and Europe. In short, globalization favors Western capital, but it is devastating to Western labor."

**C**onvincing as this may sound, the statement is specious. In fact, I made it up to illustrate a view of the world that passes for sophistication among many policy intellectuals but is almost completely refuted by the available evidence.\*

At the basic level, this conventional view suggests that capital and technology are in fixed supply, and that growth in new countries necessarily comes at the expense of the more established countries. The reality is that the diffusion of technology, while it increases competition faced by the leaders' exports, also expands their markets and reduces the price of their imports. For example, the United States must buy virtually all of its laptop computers from foreign producers, but the growth of overseas produc-

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\*For a fuller discussion of this point, see my article in the *Harvard Business Review* (Summer 1994). In a comprehensive survey of the literature on job creation, *High and Persistent Unemployment: Assessment of the Problem and its Causes* (1993), economist Jørgen Elmeskov flatly concludes that "trade seems an unlikely prime candidate for explaining increased unemployment."

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tion has enlarged markets for U.S.-made microprocessors and cut the price of laptops. In principle, the net result of the diffusion of technology could be either to raise or to lower First World income. In practice, there is little discernible effect.

Nor is the world supply of capital a fixed quantity. As countries grow, they also save—in the case of rapidly growing Asian nations, they save at astonishing rates. Third World growth may thus add to the world supply of capital as fast as or faster than it increases the demand.

Moreover, the amount of imports arriving from newly industrializing countries and the size of capital flows going to them fall far short of what is suggested in alarmist rhetoric. If there is a single piece of knowledge that separates serious international economists from fashionable popularizers, it is a sense of *how big* the world economy really is. We have all heard enough stories of particular factories that have moved to Mexico or Indonesia to form the impression that a massive global trend is underway. But even a billion-dollar investment is insignificant amid the sheer immensity of the economies of the industrialized nations. Their combined gross domestic products in 1990 exceeded \$19 trillion, and their combined domestic investment exceeded \$4 trillion. The total movement of capital to newly industrializing countries in 1993—a record year, unlikely to be surpassed in 1994—was roughly \$100 billion. That is, less than 2.5 percent of the investment of the First World actually flowed south. While it is true that tens or even hundreds of thousands of workers in advanced countries have lost their jobs to low-wage imports, the total labor force in the industrialized world is more than 400 million strong; almost every effort to quantify the reasons why more than 30 million of these workers do not have jobs

finds that Third World competition plays little if any role. That is not to say that international trade and capital mobility could not have a more important impact in the future. But declining wages and rising unemployment are not things that might happen once globalization really gets going; they are trends that have been in progress for 20 years. What is causing them?

**E**conomists use the word “technology” somewhat differently from normal people. *Webster’s* defines technology as “applied science,” which is pretty much the normal usage. When economists speak of technological change, however, they mean any kind of change in the relationship between inputs and outputs. If, for example, a manufacturer discovers that “empowering” workers by giving them a voice in how the factory is run improves quality—and allows the plant to employ fewer supervisors—then in the economic sense this would be an improvement in the technology, one that is biased against employment of managers. If, however, a manufacturer discovers that workers will produce more when there are many supervisors constantly checking on them, this is also a technological improvement, albeit one biased toward employment of managers.

In this economist’s sense, it seems undeniable that over the past 20 years the advanced nations have experienced technological change that is strongly biased in favor of skilled workers. The evidence is straightforward. The wages of skilled workers, from technicians to corporate executives, have risen sharply relative to the wages of the less skilled. In 1979, a young man with a college degree and five years on the job earned only 30 percent more than one with similar experience and a high school degree; by 1989, the premium had jumped

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*Paul Krugman is professor of economics at Stanford University. His latest book, Peddling Prosperity: Economic Sense and Nonsense in the Age of Diminished Expectations, was published earlier this year by W.W. Norton & Company. Copyright © 1994 by Paul Krugman.*

## America's Fastest Growing Occupations, 1992–2005

(In parentheses: the number of projected new jobs, in thousands)

|   | Percent change |
|---|----------------|
| Home health aides (479)                                   | 138            |
| Human services workers (256)                              | 136            |
| Personal and home care aides (166)                        | 130            |
| Computer engineers and scientists (236)                   | 112            |
| Systems analysts (501)                                    | 110            |
| Physical and Corrective therapy assistants and aides (57) | 93             |
| Physical therapists (79)                                  | 88             |
| Paralegals (81)   | 86             |
| Teachers, special education (267)                         | 74             |
| Medical assistants (128)                                  | 71             |
| Detectives, private (41)                                  | 70             |
| Correction officers (197)                                 | 70             |
| Child care workers (450)                                  | 66             |
| Travel agents (76)  | 66             |
| Radiologic technologists and technicians (102)            | 63             |
| Nursery workers (44)                                      | 62             |
| Medical records technicians (47)                          | 61             |
| Operations research analysts (27)                         | 61             |
| Occupational therapists (24)                              | 60             |
| Legal secretaries (160)                                   | 57             |
| Teachers, preschool and kindergarten (236)                | 54             |
| Manicurists (19)  | 54             |
| Producers, directors, actors, and entertainers (69)       | 54             |
| Speech-language pathologists and audiologists (37)        | 51             |
| Flight attendants (47)                                    | 51             |
| Guards (408)  | 51             |

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

*The fastest growing occupations in percentage terms are not necessarily those that will produce the largest number of new jobs. The most growth in absolute terms will occur in the retail sales clerk category, which will grow by 786,000 jobs (21 percent) between 1992 and 2005.*

to 74 percent. If the technology of the economy had not changed, this sharp increase in the relative cost of skilled workers would have given employers a strong incentive to cut back and substitute less-skilled workers where they could. In fact, exactly the opposite happened: Across the board, employers *raised* the average skill level of their work forces.

It is hard not to conclude that this technologically driven shift in demand has been

a key cause of the growth of earnings inequality in the United States as well as much of the rise in unemployment in Europe. It is not the only possible explanation. It could have been the case that rising demand for skilled workers was not so much the result of greater demand for skill within each industry as of a shift in the mix of industries toward those sectors that employ a high ratio of skilled to unskilled workers. That sort of shift could, for example, be the result of

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## Who Creates Jobs?

**T**he U.S. economy may have failed to produce rising wages during the past 20 years, but it has been a prodigious creator of new jobs. Since 1980, the nation has gained some 20 million net (after subtracting those that were lost) new jobs, and payrolls continue to grow at an impressive rate. But who is creating those jobs—and how good the jobs are—has been the subject of a sometimes rancorous and ideologically charged debate. Do small, supercharged entrepreneurial firms deserve most of the credit, or do brand-name big businesses?

David Birch, then an MIT researcher, fired the debate's first shots in a series of studies beginning in the late 1970s. Small businesses (with fewer than 100 employees), he declared in a 1981 article in the *Public Interest*, were responsible for 80 percent of all new jobs between 1969 and 1976. The implications, Birch said, were clear. Policies aimed at helping small business, such as targeted tax breaks and regulatory relief, would do a lot more to put Americans to work than broad-gauged stimulus measures such as general tax incentives, easy money, and public works programs. The message went over well in the entrepreneur-oriented America of the 1980s, especially among many conservatives. But many liberals did not like hearing that small business—generally nonunion, difficult to regulate, and conservative in its politics—might be the key to national prosperity.

Birch's argument promptly touched off a battle of the data bases among researchers, as various critics attacked his data and methods. There was plenty to criticize. In his early

research, for example, Birch did not take account of the fact that many firms that seem small are actually units of much-larger parent companies. Even the U.S. Small Business Administration claimed in 1983 only that smaller companies created 56 percent of all jobs.

In *Employers Large and Small* (1990), economists Charles Brown, James Hamilton, and James Medoff (using a different data base, with a few flaws of its own) pointed out that small business's share of total employment did not grow at all between 1958 and 1982. Even today, according to government data, firms with fewer than 100 workers employ about one-third of all Americans in the labor force; those with fewer than 500 employ about half of all workers. What seems to happen, critics such as Brown, Hamilton, and Medoff say, is that smaller firms create a lot more jobs than big companies do—especially through start-ups—but they are jobs with a high mortality rate.

For once, however, ideological smoke and fire seem to be leading toward a measure of illumination. Birch and his critics now seem to be moving toward a consensus on some important points. As Birch put it recently in a report co-authored with Anne Haggerty and William Parsons for his Cognetics, Inc., consulting firm, "The closer you look, the more useful it becomes to describe firms, not in terms of how big they are, but in terms of what they are doing." These and other researchers now find that it is not the smallest firms that produce the most jobs but, as common sense would suggest, the firms that grow the fastest. Between 1989 and

increased trade with labor-abundant Third World countries. But in fact the overwhelming evidence is that the demand for unskilled workers has fallen not because of a change in *what* we produce but because of a change in *how* we produce.

Is it really possible for technological

progress to harm large numbers of people? It is and it has been. Economic historians confirm what readers of Charles Dickens already knew, that the unprecedented technological progress of the Industrial Revolution took a long time to be reflected in higher real wages for most workers. Why? A likely answer is

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1993, according to calculations by Birch and his colleagues, a mere three percent of all American businesses generated 4.4 million net new jobs—virtually all of the jobs they believe were created during this period. Most of these “Gazelles,” as the authors call the job generators, are small, but only a minuscule fraction of small businesses are Gazelles. “Most small firms grow slowly,” Birch and his colleagues say.

The size issue is complicated by the fact that the larger Gazelles are the biggest job producers. In 1989, only three percent of the Gazelles had 100 or more employees, but they were responsible for 44 percent of all the new Gazelle jobs generated by 1993.

Finally, Gazelles are spread throughout the economy. They are not concentrated in “hot” areas such as finance or biotechnology, Birch, Haggerty, and Parsons note, but exist wherever people with new ideas and technologies “find a better way of doing things in their particular kind of firm—be it fish wholesaling, dental insurance, discount brokerage, lumber yards, or low-price outlets.”

But are these “good” jobs? Birch and his colleagues insist that they are. After all, they point out, the emerging growth companies tend to rely on new technologies, and so they need highly skilled (and highly paid) workers. It is a myth, moreover, that bigger payrolls equal bigger paychecks. Many large firms, from hospitals to department stores, pay mediocre wages. The nation’s relatively high-paying big manufacturers, basically the Fortune 500, employ only about five percent of all U.S. workers.

It is true, Birch and his colleagues write, that a somewhat higher proportion of the

new jobs created by small, fast-growing companies during the 1989–93 period paid low wages. But after taking account of the effects of layoffs and shutdowns, these younger firms were bigger net creators of “good” jobs. Indeed, they created 1.4 million net new “good” jobs while big companies *eliminated* a net of 2.5 million.

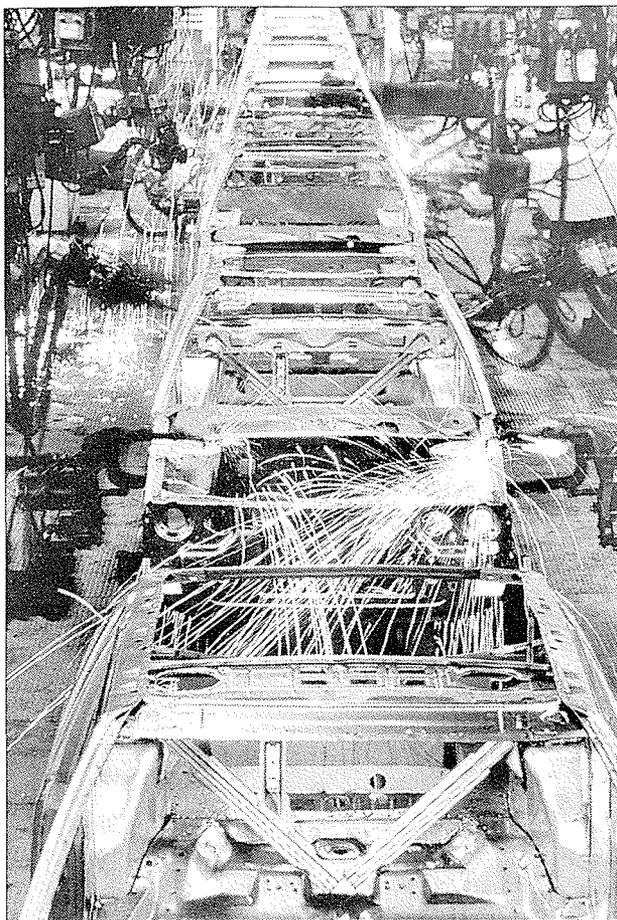
The debate over good jobs is certain to continue. Critics are sure to point out, for example, that Birch’s latest study covers a period of economic stagnation. Perhaps big firms will perform better as the economy turns up. And Birch’s study says nothing about benefits. In general, larger employers are more likely to provide such things as health insurance.

**M**eanwhile, an entirely new front in the big-versus-small debate has been opened by Bennett Harrison in his new book, *Lean and Mean* (1994). Harrison, a political economist at Carnegie Mellon University, takes aim not only at the statistical findings of Birch and his allies but at the whole “romantic belief in the significance of atomistic, small enterprise . . . in a modern industrial economy.” He insists that many of today’s small firms are simply creatures—by virtue of contracts or handshakes—of newly “lean and mean” big corporations. Big business still dominates the world economy, Harrison says, surviving by letting smaller players who offer smaller paychecks take over many of its peripheral functions. And in the rise of this “networked” corporation, Harrison contends, lies the source of the growing income inequality in the United States during the past 20 years.

that early industrial technology was not only labor saving but strongly capital using—that is, the new technology encouraged industrialists to use less labor and to invest more capital to produce a given amount of output. The result was a fall in the demand for labor that kept real wages stagnant for perhaps 50 years,

even as the incomes of England’s propertied classes soared.

Economists more or less agree that the same thing is happening to the Western world today, except that the benefits of biased technological change are flowing not to capital but to the highly skilled.



American industry is producing more with fewer workers: Two million manufacturing jobs disappeared between 1988 and '93.

It is easy to understand why the Industrial Revolution was capital using and labor saving. Just think of a factory full of power looms replacing thousands of hand weavers—the development that gave rise to the Luddite rebellion in early-19th-century Britain. Can we come up with comparable images that relate recent technological change in the economist's sense to its more normal usage? That is, what is changing in the way that we produce goods and service that has apparently devalued less-skilled workers?

The short answer is that we do not know. There are, however, several interesting stories and pieces of evidence.

Probably the simplest story about how

modern technology may promote inequality is that the rapid spread of computers favors those who possess the knowledge needed to use them effectively. Anecdotes are easy to offer. Economist Jagdish Bhagwati cites the "computer with a single skilled operator that replaces half a dozen unskilled typists." Anecdotes are no substitute for real quantitative evidence, but for what it is worth, serious studies by labor economists do suggest that growing computer use can explain as much as one-half of the increase in the earnings edge enjoyed by college graduates during the 1980s.

Yet there is probably more to the story. The professions that have seen the largest increases in incomes since the 1970s have been in fields whose practitioners are not obviously placed in greater demand by computers: lawyers, doctors, and, above all, corporate executives. And the growth of inequality in the United States has a striking "fractal" quality: Widening gaps *between* education levels and professions are mirrored by increased inequality of earnings *within* professions. Lawyers make much more compared with janitors than they did 15 years ago, but the best-paid lawyers also make much more compared with the average lawyer. Again, this is hard to reconcile with a simple story in which new computers require people who know how to use them.

One intriguing hypothesis about the relationship between technology and income distribution, a hypothesis that can explain why people who do not operate computers or fax machines can nonetheless be enriched by them at the expense of others, is the "superstar" hypothesis of Sherwin Rosen, an economist at the University of Chicago. Almost 15 years ago, before the explosion of inequality had become apparent, Rosen argued in the *Journal of Political Economy* that communication and information technology extend an individual's

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span of influence and control. A performance by a stage actor can be watched by only a few hundred people, while one by a television star can be watched by tens of millions. Less obviously, an executive, a lawyer, or even an entrepreneurial academic can use computers, faxes, and electronic mail to keep a finger in far more pies than used to be possible. As a result, Rosen predicted, the wage structure would increasingly come to have a "tournament" quality: A few people, those judged by whatever criteria to be the best, would receive huge financial rewards, while those who were merely competent would receive little. The point of Rosen's analysis was that technology may not so much directly substitute for workers as multiply the power of particular individuals, allowing these lucky tournament winners to substitute for large numbers of the less fortunate. Television does not take the place of hundreds of struggling standup nightclub comedians; it allows Jay Leno to take their place instead.

**W**ill technology continue to favor a few lucky people over the rest, or will the last quarter of the 20th century turn out to have been a transitory bad patch for the common man? At first sight, it seems obvious that the progress of technology must lead to an ever-growing premium on skill. How could it be otherwise in an era when sophisticated computers and information systems are becoming ever more crucial to our economy? Isn't it obvious that the only good jobs will be for those who possess exceptional intellectual talent and skills—those who, in the phrase of Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, are able to work as "symbolic analysts"?

History teaches us, however, that merely assuming a continuation of recent trends is often very misleading. Technology is less like a railroad track than a spiral staircase, with many reversals of direction along its upward path. The long-term effect of the Industrial Revolution is a case in point. To Victorian futurists, it seemed obvious that the capital-us-

ing bias of industrial technology would continue indefinitely, bringing with it an ever-greater gulf between the owners of capital and the working class. In *The Time Machine* (1895), H. G. Wells forecast a future in which workers have been reduced to subhuman status. These Victorians were wrong—indeed, if Wells had possessed the kind of data available today, he would have known that wages had begun to rise again long before he wrote his novel. During the 20th century, capital has claimed a declining share of the national income and labor has taken a growing share.

**T**echnological advance, moreover, does not always increase the need for skilled labor. On the contrary, in the past one of the main effects of mechanization was to reduce the special skills required to carry out many tasks. It took considerable skill and experience to weave cloth on a hand loom, but just about anybody could learn to tend a power loom. What is true is that, to date, technological progress has consistently tended to increase the demand for a particular kind of skill, the kind that is taught in formal education and is most easily acquired by the kind of person who does well in formal education. Two centuries ago, only a minority of jobs required literacy; one century ago, only a few jobs required anything like a modern college education. Nowadays higher education is not a luxury for the wealthy but something intensely practical, a virtual necessity for the career minded.

But it is not at all clear that this trend will continue indefinitely. There is no inherent reason why technology cannot be "college-education saving" rather than college-education using. It is possible to see examples of how this might occur even today. This essay, for example, was written using a newly acquired word processor. I did not bother to read the manual; the graphical interface, with its menus of icons, usually makes it obvious how to do what I want, and I can easily call up on-screen help with the push of a button if I get lost. Whenever we use the term "user-friendly," we

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are implying that we have a production technique that requires less skill than it used to.

But isn't this kind of reversal always going to be the exception rather than the rule? Not necessarily. In fact, I would make a speculative argument that in the long run technology will tend to devalue the work of "symbolic analysts" and favor the talents that are common to all human beings. After all, even the most brilliant specialists are actually rather poor at formal reasoning, while even the most ordinary person can carry out feats of informal information processing that remain far beyond the reach of the most powerful computers. As the artificial intelligence pioneer Marvin Minsky points out, "A 1956 program solved hard problems in mathematical logic, and a 1961 program solved college-level problems in calculus. Yet not until the 1970s could we construct robot programs that could see and move well enough to arrange children's building blocks into simple towers. . . . What people vaguely call common sense is actually more intricate than most of the technical expertise we admire." Chess-playing programs are not yet quite good enough to beat the world's greatest players, but they are getting there; a program that can recognize faces as well as a two-year-old can remains a distant dream.

Rereading *Player Piano* recently, I found the totally automated factories Vonnegut imagined more than 40 years ago completely credible, but found myself wondering who cleans them (or for that matter the houses of his industrial elite)? It is no accident that no description is given of how these mundane tasks are

automated—because as Vonnegut must have sensed, it will be a very long time before we know how to build a machine equipped with the ordinary human common sense to do what we usually regard as simple tasks.

So here is a speculation: The time may come when most tax lawyers are replaced by expert systems software, but human beings are still needed—and well paid—for such truly difficult occupations as gardening, house cleaning, and the thousands of other services that will receive an ever-growing share of our expenditure as mere consumer goods become steadily cheaper. The high-skill professions whose members have done so well during the last 20 years may turn out to be the modern counterpart of early-19th-century weavers, whose incomes soared after the mechanization of spinning, only to crash when the technological revolution reached their own craft.

I suspect, then, that the current era of growing inequality and the devaluation of ordinary work will turn out to be only a temporary phase. In some sufficiently long run the tables will be turned: Those uncommon skills that are rare because they are so unnatural will be largely taken over or made easy by computers, while machines will still be unable to do what every person can. In other words, I predict that the current age of inequality will give way to a golden age of *equality*. In the very long run, of course, the machines will be able to do everything we can. By that time, however, it will be *their* responsibility to take care of the problem.

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# THE IMMIGRANT CHALLENGE

BY THOMAS MULLER

**N**ot since the Great Depression has the United States seen a tide of anti-immigrant sentiment to rival today's. So strong is public feeling that it helped drive President Bill Clinton to reverse the nation's long-held policy of welcoming any refugee who managed to escape from Fidel Castro's Cuba. Instead of a hero's welcome, the Cuban boat people received inglorious confinement in Panama or at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay.

Two years earlier, after the 1992 Los Angeles riots, Patrick Buchanan declared that

"foreigners are coming to this country illegally and helping to burn down one of the greatest cities in America." Buchanan, then seeking the Republican presidential nomination, may represent an extreme in American politics, but he was not shouted down when he made this incendiary statement. Indeed, many "moderates" simply found another way to blame the immigrants, claiming they had taken jobs from the city's poor blacks. This fall, Californians will vote in a statewide referendum on a proposition that would deny schooling and nonemergency medical care to illegal aliens.



*Korean Americans demonstrate in Los Angeles after the 1992 riot. A number of Korean-owned stores and businesses were burned down during the violence.*

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Congress may limit health and other benefits even for those entering legally, and new barriers are being erected along the U.S.-Mexico border against illegal immigrants. Even New Yorkers, heirs to one of the most liberal traditions in the nation, tell pollsters that recent immigration has hurt their city.

**S**ince 1980, close to 14 million Mexicans, Central Americans, Asians, and other immigrants have entered the United States, about two million of them illegally. Net immigration (excluding undocumented aliens) now accounts for over 35 percent of U.S. population growth, and its share will grow in the years ahead. Half or more of all workers entering the labor force during the next decade will be immigrants or the children of foreign-born families that arrived after the mid-1960s. Unlike earlier immigration waves, this one has washed over the entire nation, bringing foreign-born workers to virtually every community, large and small, from the rural South to the mountain West.

Anti-immigrant feeling is a simple sentiment with complex roots, some of them social and racial, and some seeming more practical. Immigrants are blamed for overcrowded schools, rising hospital deficits, and high welfare costs—indeed, for virtually everything that ails American society. Nothing ails this country more than the poverty of a large segment (one-third) of the black population, and stagnant or declining wages among Americans of all races and all but the highest income levels, and fingers are being pointed at the immigrants. Not too many years ago, the sight of a Korean shopkeeper or a Salvadoran construction worker would have been taken by many citizens as reassuring evidence of the American Dream's lasting power. Now such recent arrivals are likely to be seen as alien interlopers who are taking

good jobs from hard-working Americans.

These sentiments are strongest, of course, among groups with a disproportionately high share of low-wage and unskilled jobs. This has always been so. "Every hour sees the black man elbowed out of employment by some newly arrived immigrant," Frederick Douglass despaired in 1853. A century and a half later, when Congress sanctioned increased immigration in the Immigration Act of 1990, another black leader, Representative Major Owens (D.-N.Y.), warned that "we are taking one more step toward the creation of a permanent black underclass."

A certain sort of common sense suggests that such warnings may be justified. Douglass's certainly was. Free blacks who had found work in antebellum New York City as waiters, bricklayers, and servants found Irish immigrants moving into these fields while their own paths into other occupations were blocked by racism. Today, it is easy to produce anecdotes about native-born men and women who apply for a job, only to see the employer award it to a Mexican or an Asian. There even seems to be some hard data to back up this impression. Economist Donald Huddle of Rice University, a frequent critic of immigration policy, claims that for every four unskilled immigrant workers, one or two U.S.-born Americans are unable to find jobs or are thrown out of work.

But this kind of evidence tends to melt under close scrutiny. Application of Huddle's ratio to actual population figures, for example, leads to the preposterous conclusion that virtually every low-skilled native-born worker in America is jobless. Representative Owens's statement overlooks, among other things, the recent experience of Western Europe, which is now watching in dismay as its own white-skinned underclass forms in the cities. And anecdotes can be

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*Thomas Muller, a consultant to local governments, is co-author of The Fourth Wave: California's Newest Immigrants (1985) and author of Immigrants and the American City (1993). Copyright © 1994 by Thomas Muller.*

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found to illustrate any story. Even when they are true, they tend to ride roughshod over complex realities. Immigrants certainly do take some jobs, but they also fill jobs that nobody else will accept and which in many cases would not even exist without immigrant labor. Moreover, immigrants are consumers as well as workers, and their purchases of everything from paper towels to minivans help to create jobs in the U.S. economy.

The unpleasant reality is that persistent poverty among blacks, high rates of joblessness, and stagnant or falling real wages, have complex causes. Foremost among them is technological change, which has raised the basic skill level required for a decent job above what many people possess. The evidence of this can be seen in the blighted neighborhoods of Rotterdam and Liverpool as easily as it can in the South Bronx or on Chicago's South Side. But the immigrant explanation for what has gone wrong is attractive because it is quick, simple, and personal.

**T**he fear that outsiders will take jobs from native-born workers is old and well traveled. Artificers (skilled workers) in Elizabethan London and Canterbury rioted against French immigrants in the 1660s and 1670s. A sympathetic speaker in Parliament explained that the immigrants "took the very bread out of their mouths." Others worried that "poor industrious families" might be ruined by competition from foreign-born workers. Nineteenth-century America, with its vast areas of uninhabited land and long stretches of chronic labor shortages, would seem an unlikely place for anxiety about employment opportunities. Yet in the 1830s accusations that Irish immigrants were vying for low-skilled jobs, such as stevedore and construction laborer, held by native-born workers sparked major riots in several American cities. Irish workers in New York City rioted against free blacks during the Civil War and attacked Chinese laborers on the

West Coast a decade later. During the 1880s, southern blacks protested that Italians—"dirty and ignorant sons of Naples," as one black newspaper put it—were taking farm jobs from them.

**B**y the end of the century, both major political parties were taking aim at immigrant workers in their political platforms. "For the protection of the quality of our American citizenship and the wages of working men against the fatal competition of low priced labor, we demand that the immigration laws be thoroughly enforced," the GOP thundered in 1896. Not to be outdone, the Democrats declared that "the most efficient way of protecting American labor is to prevent the importation of foreign pauper labor to compete with it." The nation's powerful captains of industry, however, did not exert their considerable political power in support of anti-immigrant legislation. No doubt they believed that a continuing influx of overseas labor would make life difficult for the nation's fledgling labor movement, but many also recognized that immigrants expanded the market for mass-produced goods and increased their profits. Andrew Carnegie remarked in 1905 that it was a mistake for organized labor to believe that "a man who comes to this country to work injures other working men by doing so." Labor, he continued, "is an undivided whole, and every laborer, being a consumer, employs other labor."

It was only in the early 1920s, a period of acute isolationism, postwar economic recession, and rising ethnic bigotry that the anti-immigration forces triumphed on Capitol Hill and won restrictive legislation, the Immigration Act of 1924. In the decades that followed, migrants (black and white) from the rural South and immigrants from the Caribbean and Mexico met the labor needs of American industry.

Whether immigration limits helped blacks and other poor Americans is a difficult question which admits no single answer.\* Black share-

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\*For a fuller discussion, see my book, *Immigrants and the American City* (1993).

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croppers and field hands who managed to find unskilled factory jobs in Chicago and other northern cities during the 1920s probably did benefit. But the economy as a whole suffered from the exclusion of several million immigrants during the 1920s; the slowdown in construction and consumer spending no doubt contributed to the coming of the Great Depression in 1929. Likewise, the southern migrants who were able to land good factory jobs in the North during the Great Depression and World War II were direct beneficiaries of the Immigration Act of 1924. But if immigration had been allowed to continue, the United States would have had a larger working-age population—roughly 2.5 million stronger—to commit to the military and industrial effort to win the war. The conflict might have ended sooner, with fewer casualties. After the war, the dearth of new immigrants helped speed the decline of the nation's big cities, many of which began losing population during the 1950s.

Today, economists have at their disposal much better data and methods to measure the effects of immigrant labor. What they show, by and large, is that Andrew Carnegie was right. During the economic recovery of the early 1990s, for example, immigrants were a major source of new housing demand, and residential construction was followed by a resurgence in purchases of appliances, furniture, and other capital goods. (If job growth was not as great as in other postwar expansions, it was not the immigrants' fault but the result of large productivity gains brought about chiefly through the use of new technology.) A Harvard University study estimates that immigrants will purchase 1.5 million homes during the next six years. James Johnson, chairman of the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), believes that the recent immigrant surge will eventually create a major housing boom that will reverse urban decay in many American cities.

Immigrants also stimulate demand for public services such as education, although

their impact on public finances is in dispute. Unquestionably, more teachers and other municipal workers are needed as population grows. Immigrants with low earnings cannot be expected to generate enough revenue to cover the cost of the services they receive. This is not an issue in the case of well-educated, highly trained foreign-born professionals, who typically produce a fiscal surplus. It is important to remember that some immigrants arrive with special skills. They include not only Pakistani engineers but Portuguese stonemasons and Korean wig-makers. It is chiefly because of the presence of leather workers trained in Mexico that there is a footwear industry in Los Angeles today.

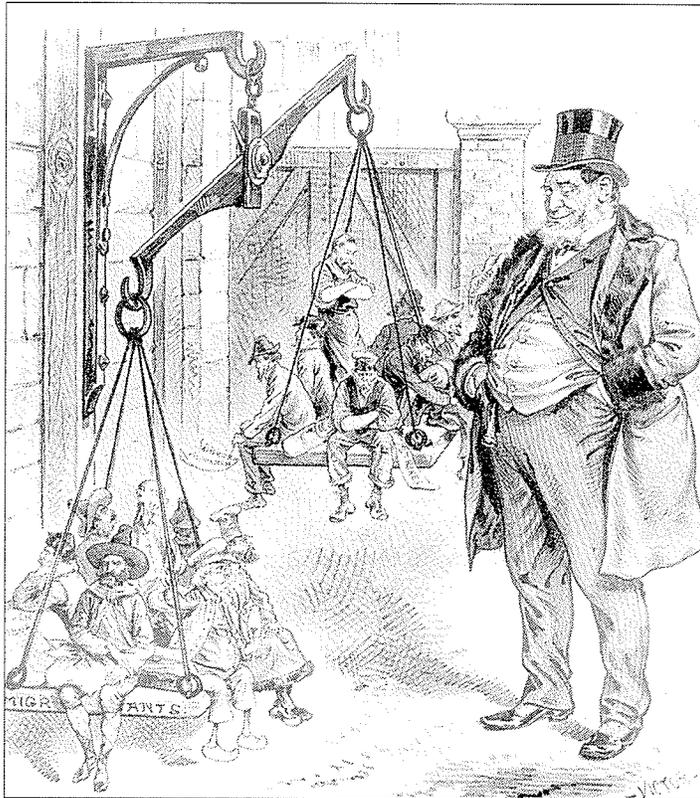
**W**hat about the perception that immigrants compete for jobs with particular groups of native-born Americans? Among middle-class families, this concern is generally slight. While there are many foreign-born engineers in the United States, for example, there are not nearly enough native-born members of the profession to keep up with the demand. Foreign-born physicians, willing to work in public institutions and in less-than-desirable locales, have been a valuable addition to the U.S. work force. What provokes middle-class anxiety is not the job market but competition for positions whose number is fixed, notably at universities. The influx of Asian students onto the elite campuses of the University of California system, for example, has become a highly charged issue in the state.

But the American public's chief worry about aliens in the labor market is that they are competing for the same jobs as blacks with limited skills. Because average incomes in the United States have failed to rise since the early 1970s, shortly after the beginning of the current immigration wave, it is tempting to link stagnant income levels with immigrant labor. Should not blacks, who hold a higher proportion of low-paying jobs than most other groups, feel threatened by the massive flow of

Mexicans, Central Americans, and emigrants from the Caribbean nations?

If the total number of low-skilled jobs were fixed, there would indeed be substantial, direct competition between the groups. But it is not. The example of two families with homes on the same suburban street in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., illustrates how the pool of low-end jobs expands with supply. One of these households employs a maid from Honduras two days a week, and periodically brings in a crew of Nicaraguan nationals to work on the lawn. A neighbor has a nanny from Sri Lanka to care for the children, enabling both parents to work. These are jobs that in all likelihood simply would not exist if there were not immigrants to fill them. There are not long lines of native-born Americans waiting to work for the pay these couples can afford.

In 1983, almost 600,000 blacks in the United States, or six percent of all employed blacks, worked in menial jobs in households or on farms. A decade later, the number of blacks in these occupations had dropped by nearly a third, while Hispanics increased their numbers in these areas by 70 percent. Some would no doubt say that this is a case of immigrants pushing native-born workers out of their jobs. A more rational explanation is that many younger blacks have shunned these "dead-end" jobs, generally advancing to better-paid occupations as they acquire the necessary education or training, but sometimes moving laterally, into the underground economy or into unemployment. Removing immigrants from the equation



By the late 1880s, when this cartoon appeared, anti-immigrant sentiment was on the rise. The employer says: "As long as I am plentifully supplied with Immigrant Labor, I shall be deaf to the demands of the native workingman."

makes the process easier to see: Not many people would call the change from the 1930s, when three out of four blacks in America worked as domestics, on farms, or as unskilled laborers, a defeat rather than a great triumph.

Overall, about 170,000 blacks left (or were displaced from) several categories of low-paying jobs during the 1983–93 period. At the same time, about 800,000 gained management and professional positions (a rise of more than 60 percent), and another 800,000 moved into administrative-support and sales jobs. White-collar occupations accounted for the vast majority of additions to the black labor force.

Yet even as this very positive trend was

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gathering strength, a disturbing schism was emerging among black Americans. As University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson observed during the mid-1980s, one segment of the population was rising to prosperity while another—lacking education and marketable skills—was sinking deeper into poverty. In mid-1994, for example, the unemployment rate for black teenagers who were between 16 and 19 and who were not attending school was 44 percent, more than twice the rate for whites or Hispanics. Black joblessness, which has persisted at levels far above the national average since the 1960s, has both economic and social roots. Wilson places much of the blame on the loss of manufacturing jobs in the urban core and the deteriorating social climate within inner cities. Is rising immigration another underlying cause?

**S**tudies comparing cities with differing percentages of immigrant workers find no significant variation in black income, earnings, unemployment rates, or other economic indicators. Indeed, they show that blacks do somewhat *better* in areas with a large immigrant presence. Thus, in the immigrant magnets of Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, about one out of every four blacks in 1992 was employed as a professional worker or as a manager, almost 50 percent above the national average for blacks. These gains reflect, in part, rising educational attainment among blacks in these cities and nationally. By 1990, 36 percent of all black adults across the nation, but only 28 percent of all Hispanics (and an even smaller share of Hispanic immigrants), had some college education. Immigrants *do* have a modest adverse impact on the wages of one group: native-born Hispanics. That is because the two groups are more likely to compete for similar jobs.

Sophisticated econometric models confirm these findings. Kristen Butcher and David Card at Princeton University found in their 1991 study little indication of an ad-

verse wage effect of immigrants “either cross-sectionally or within cities over time.” A study by Julian Simon and several co-authors released in 1993 concluded that “there is little or no observed increase in aggregate national unemployment due to immigration.” Extensive research by Robert LaLonde and Robert Topel at the University of Chicago found that “immigration has a small effect on wages but virtually all of this burden falls on immigrants themselves.” In other words, the surfeit of immigrants competing for jobs as nannies or in apparel factories keeps wages down in these fields.

**W**hile there is scant evidence that immigrants are hurting the chances of blacks and other minorities today, there is reason to worry about the future. One of the main avenues of black upward mobility in America during the past 30 years has been government employment. In Los Angeles, 30 percent of all black jobholders—but only six percent of employed Hispanics—work for the federal, state, or local government. Today, blacks are more than twice as likely as Hispanics to hold jobs in the public sector. And these jobs typically pay better than comparable ones in the private sector. It is not hard to see what is going to happen. As Hispanic (and Asian) political strength grows—and the two groups together recently passed blacks in sheer numbers—so will the demand for a “fair share” of these desirable jobs. This is already occurring. A recent report by the U.S. Postal Service’s Board of Governors concludes that blacks dominate the agency, while Hispanics are under-represented—not particularly surprising since blacks, finding other doors closed to them, began flocking to the Post Office Department during the 1930s. In Los Angeles, the report notes, 63 percent of all Postal Service employees are black, even though blacks constitute only 11 percent of the city’s work force. Unless large numbers of blacks begin moving into the private sec-

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tor, bitter political struggles are likely, some of them on Capitol Hill and in courtrooms, but many of them in the furnace of big-city electoral politics.

**M**eanwhile, the flow of immigrants seeking low-skilled jobs is not going to slow any time soon. As long as there are help-wanted signs in the nation's restaurants, hotels, and suburban shopping centers, foreigners seeking a better life will continue to come to the United States. Although there has been a shift toward work that requires greater skill and more education, one study projecting job growth in the coming decade includes occupations such as janitor, food counter worker, and waiter among its top 10. Because both legal and illegal entry are expected to rise above current levels in the years ahead, there will be plenty of applicants for these jobs.

No measure now contemplated, including a national identity card, will stop or substantially slow the immigrant influx. Instant global communications, easy transportation, and the high U.S. standard of living keep the dream alive of coming to America. Only draconian steps that American society is unwilling to consider—such as mandatory confinement of undocumented workers and their employers—could conceivably keep immigrants out. For black youngsters and others looking for jobs near the bottom of the occupational ladder, the message is clear. It is futile to compete directly with immigrants who will keep coming and keep working for low wages and it is vitally important to acquire enough education and training to qualify for jobs that aliens cannot get. There will be many more such jobs in the future and for many of them we will doubtless have the foreign-born workers themselves—and their paychecks—to thank.

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# THE VIRTUAL JOB

BY LAURA L. NASH

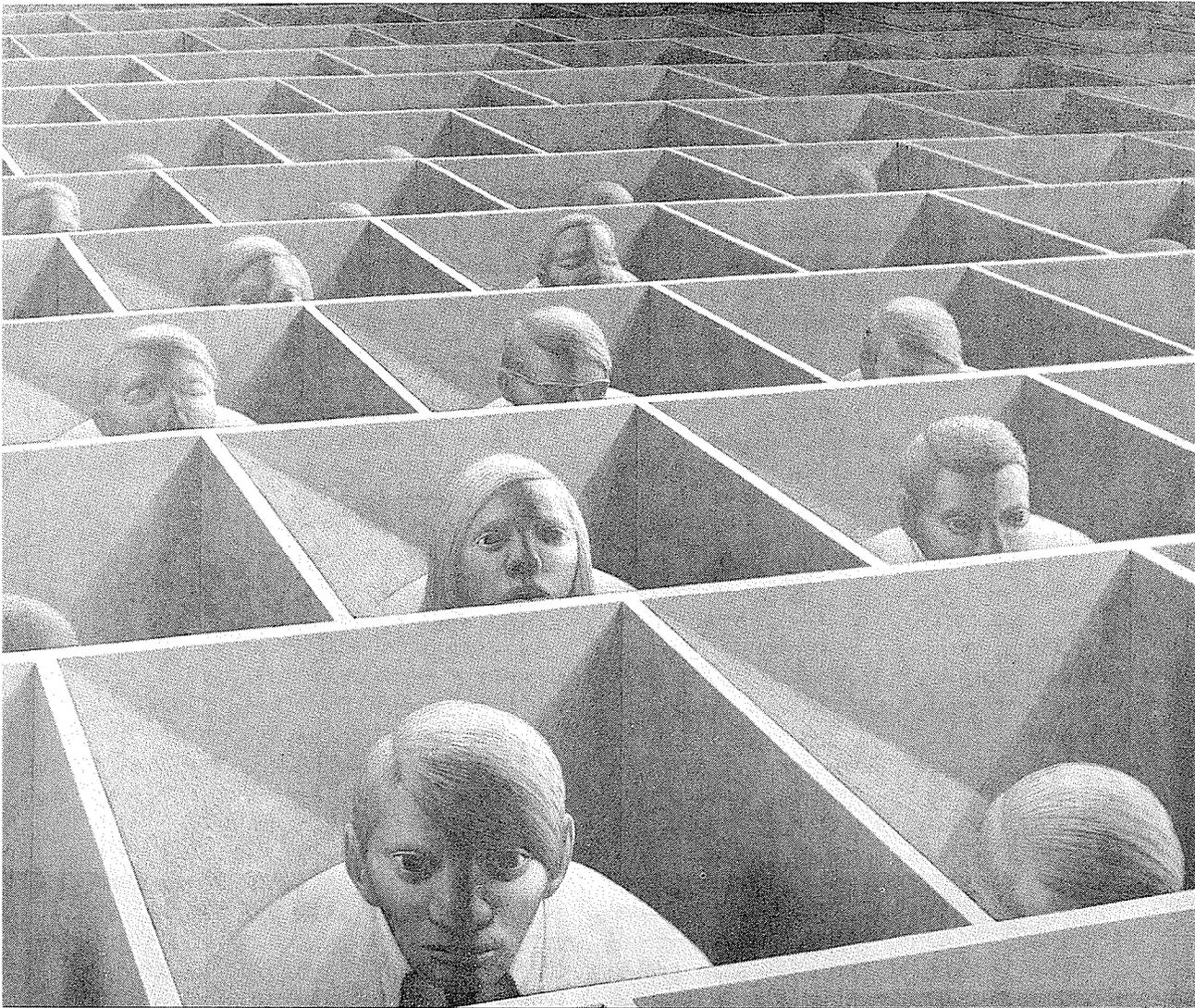
Something very odd is going on in the American corporate workplace. Employees are being told to prepare for a radical new condition of permanent insecurity, a future full of sporadic layoffs, endless efforts to upgrade job skills, and perpetually recombining work teams of insiders and "outsourcers." Continuous corporate "rightsizing" will dictate a "portfolio career" strategy: Since workers will no longer spend their careers with one or two employers, accumulating a portfolio of portable skills will be essential. Yet even as the corporation encourages "hard" qualities such as self-reliance and adaptability, it is also rushing headlong toward a supposedly kinder, gentler ethos. Large firms in particular are providing a growing variety of programs and social supports for those who remain under the corporate umbrella—however long that may be. The new formula might be described as a "love the one you're with" approach.

The turmoil in the workplace is being presented as stimulating and exciting, an opportunity for personal and professional growth. The modern corporation will supply precious training and experience, *Fortune* said recently in describing the "new deal" between employers and employees, and workers in turn will be expected to act like entrepreneurs (or "intrapreneurs,") within the corporation: Find a way to "add value to the organization" and you get a new job. Fail and you look for a job elsewhere. But that is not so bad. "If the old arrangement sounded like binding nuptial vows," says *Fortune*, "the new one suggests a series of casual,

thrilling—if often temporary—encounters."

One might almost be tempted to conclude that a new age of self-actualizing individualism is dawning. Released from the paternalistic and hierarchical strictures of the old corporation, the new employee will be free to blaze his or her own professional trail while the corporation stands by to help tend to personal needs that might impair performance, from child care to treatment for alcoholism. At the same time, it is also possible to see these developments as disturbing signs of an emerging form of corporatism in which areas of life once thought to be strictly private are increasingly regulated by a supposedly beneficent corporation. Those without ties to such a large institution will be spared such intrusions, of course, but may also be forced to go without many of the benefits accompanying it. Despite its simultaneous appeal to humanism and good economic sense, this new corporatism may not be kinder and gentler at all, and it may not even be all that good for business.

Even as it downsizes and rightsizes, the large American corporation is increasingly assuming the role of a nanny. In 1992, benefits accounted for 32 percent of employee pay and were the fastest-growing element of compensation. Benefits include not only the traditional health insurance and pensions but a broad array of other goodies, ranging from those of the sensible-shoes variety (job training and tuition reimbursements at \$35 billion annually) to more exotic offerings. Employer-provided legal services, for example,



Landscape with Figures (1966), by George Tooker

have increased sevenfold in the last decade. The corporate reach increasingly extends into what was once considered private life. Employer-sponsored health maintenance organizations, with their sometimes intrusive in-house “wellness” programs (Stop smoking! Lose weight!) are becoming part of the corporate way of life. Child-care programs of various kinds are proliferating, and among forward-looking people in the business world there is talk of the need to transform child care into “dependent care” programs providing various benefits to employees with elderly parents.

It is not unusual for today’s large corporation to offer fitness programs, marriage counseling, substance-abuse detection and treatment, AIDS counseling, diversity training, creative-thinking seminars, treatment of

depression, diet and nutrition oversight, yoga instruction, interpersonal-relations counseling, and personal financial planning. One well-known company, EDS, even has on-site car care.

Many of these offerings involve things that were formerly considered personal or domestic responsibilities, frequently managed by a wife who held no paying job. Now, as a demonstration of its newfound concern with employees’ sense of well-being—and an undisguised desire to mitigate any condition that might detract from employee performance and the corporate bottom line—the corporation offers to take care of these matters. One might call this new, kinder and gentler approach to the employer-employee contract the “feminization” of the corporation.

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Accompanying the trend is a growing emphasis on "softer" management skills as the key to getting ahead in the managerial world. High on the list of qualities thought necessary for executive effectiveness in the 1990s are interpersonal skills, an ability to work with others in teams, and various kinds of "soft" abilities, such as intuitive reasoning, "people skills," and "creative thinking." Physical self-improvement is also in, and mental health is a major area of focus. Company-sponsored meditation programs and wilderness experiences designed to build trust and foster team spirit are becoming the vogue in corporate America. Now there are even humor consultants to help make fun and profit work together.

**D**espite its soft face and seemingly benign motivations, there is a distinctively hard edge to the new corporate humanism. Employees who are showered with benefits may pay a price in the loss of personal choice. Formerly private decisions about lifestyle and even personality may now be restricted by the company in the name of boosting personal performance and cutting costs. Today's well-bred manager may find, for example, that the powers that be in the personnel department regard his or her high cholesterol count as an indication of selfish disregard for the corporate team or a sign of insufficient self-discipline. The employee who insists on taking time off to care for a sick child despite the first-rate day-care services offered by the company may find his or her dedication to the job questioned a little more closely.

The corporation is not solely responsible for what is happening. Indeed, the corporation itself appears to be in danger of being vic-

timized by the kinder, gentler ethos. Rising expectations keep upping the ante for what is considered a "responsible" commitment by a caring corporation. It is as if the entire corporate society had fallen under the spell of a medical-therapeutic imperative: Whatever alleviates employees' stress or might contribute to their "wellness" is now considered a potential, and sometimes essential, corporate investment.

**T**he rise of the nanny corporation represents a profound shift in corporate beliefs about managerial effectiveness. This change is partly a product of American cultural and economic insecurity in the face of powerful global competition. It is also a response to real problems faced by employees. But in large part it can be traced to the rise of the so-called "new class" of highly educated knowledge workers—from personnel experts to advertising copywriters to attorneys—whose numbers and power have been growing in the information economy. Once the very embodiment of anti-capitalistic, anticorporate attitudes, the new class is now the predominant cultural force within the American corporation, supplying its consultants, academic advisers, and theorists, and even much of its staff. It is from this group that the corporation gets its belief in the power of holistic, self-actualizing, therapeutic, and knowledge-expanding exercises. The emergence of the nanny corporation reflects just how deeply some of the values of the 1960s and early 1970s have been assimilated into the economic logic of the 1990s. We see a new corporate culture developing based on knowledge, therapy, self-actualization, tolerance, individualism, and holistic, preventive approaches to basic

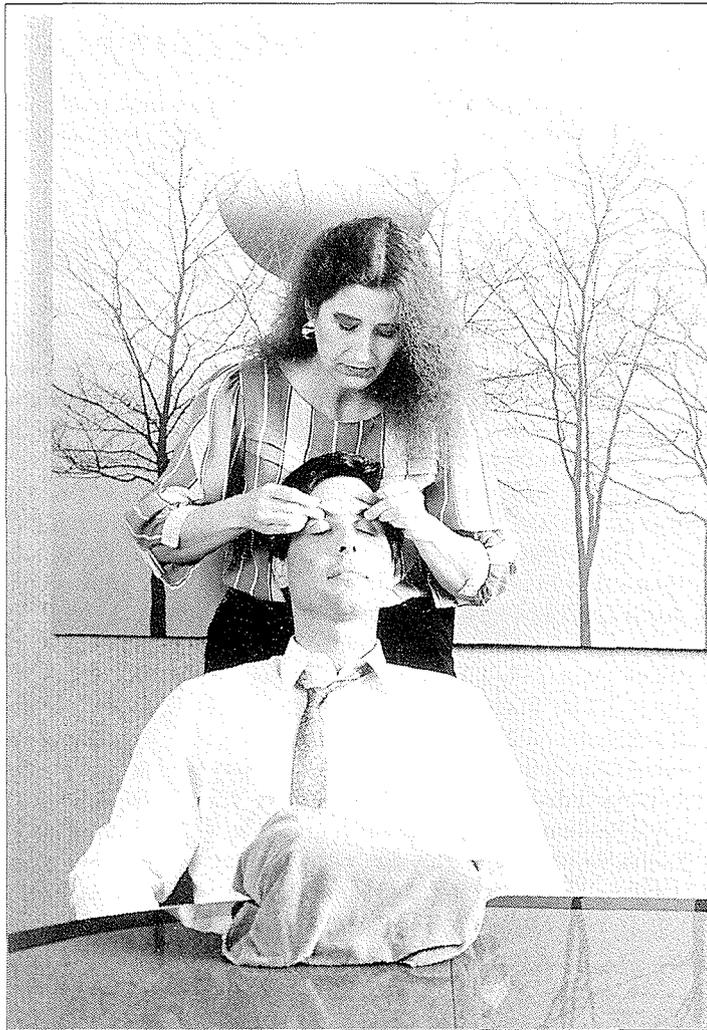
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*Laura L. Nash is senior research coordinator at the Institute for the Study of Economic Culture at Boston University and teaches business ethics at the university's School of Management. She is the author of Good Intentions Aside: A Manager's Guide to Resolving Ethical Problems (1990) and co-editor with Frank Heuberger of A Fatal Embrace? Assessing Holistic Trends in Human Resource Programs (1994). Copyright © 1994 by Laura L. Nash.*

human problems.

The nanny corporation is an unfortunate but predictable perversion of the remedies business gurus have prescribed for corporate America since the late 1970s. The new management theories were fundamentally sensible enough, but their implications could be—and were—played out in a variety of different ways. From Peter Drucker to Peter Senge, American management theorists have generally agreed that only a radical change in mental approach would prepare managers to cope with the competitive challenges facing business in the late 20th century. Lulled by its decades of supremacy at home and abroad after World War II, the American corporation had ossified, the theorists said. Management had become top-heavy, market-insensitive, and excessively bureaucratic.

Beginning with the prescriptive classic by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, Jr., *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies* (1982), there developed a series of management theories that held up a new ideal of self-motivated, entrepreneurial performance by employees at all levels of business. As the understanding of managerial expertise shifted, so did the essentials of employee motivation and development. Peters and Waterman, drawing on the notion of "transforming leadership" popularized by political scientist James MacGregor Burns, stressed the need for business executives to take a holistic approach to management instead of relying on ever more narrowly focused specialized expertise.



*The office of the future? Stress management is taken seriously at this Dallas firm, where a professional masseuse visits every month.*

The new manager would build business success by recognizing the importance of a hitherto unappreciated set of skills: the ability to transcend daily affairs, to "create meaning" for others in the organization, to make use of nonrational modes of thought, and to build good "relationships" with customers and employee teams.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter of Harvard Business School, another prominent management theorist, emphasizes that the management of change and innovation requires the "empowerment" of employees, the creation

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## Take This Job . . .

*Why do so many Americans throw so much into their work? One surprising reason, writes sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, a Wilson Center Senior Scholar, in The Public Interest (Winter 1990), is that they like their jobs.*

**B**eliefs about the work ethic vary over time and place. There is, however, a general inclination for older people to believe that things were better—or at least more moral, more decent—when they were young. As Adriano Tilgher, a historian of work, wrote in 1931, “Every country responds to the lament that the workforce does not burn in the younger generation, the post-war generation.”

The affluent generally complain that their subordinates, the less privileged, do not work hard and have lost the work ethic. A survey of members of the American Management Association found that 79 percent agreed that “the nation’s productivity is suffering because the traditional American work ethic has eroded.” But this is an old story. Harold Wilensky notes that in 1495 the English Parliament passed a statute on working hours and justified it in the following preamble: “Diverse artificers and labourers . . . waste much part of the day . . . in late

coming unto their work, early departing therefrom, long sitting at breakfast, at their dinner and noon meal, and long time of sleep in afternoon.”

The idea that people should work hard—because doing so is virtuous, because it advances the common good, or even because it lets them accumulate wealth—is, in historical terms, a relatively recent one. Since work is difficult, the question is not why people goof off, but rather why—in the absence of compulsion—they work hard. . . .

While I have few doubts that the work ethic is less prominent now than it was in the 19th century, the available facts do not justify bad-mouthing it. As the March 1989 issue of *Psychology Today* notes, in the 1950s a number of sociologists predicted that Americans would increasingly choose to emphasize leisure and to abandon work—and were proven entirely wrong. To quote George Harris and Robert Trotter: “Work has become our intoxicant and Americans are working harder than

of networks of supportive peers, and the education of first-level employees. Peter Senge’s *Fifth Discipline* (1990) brilliantly outlines the need for what he calls systems thinking. Corporations, says Senge, must become “learning organizations,” realigning themselves in order to maximize their ability to absorb and act on information. Managers must enlarge their personal capacity to deal with factors that lie outside normal planning processes: complexity, delay, and setbacks. Most recently, a series of books on socially friendly values has captured the managerial imagination. Tom Chappell’s *The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good* (1993) is one of the most

popular works in this genre. Written by a successful entrepreneur who took a sabbatical from work to get a degree at Harvard Divinity School, *The Soul of a Business* is filled with inspirational anecdotes about Chappell and his wife and managers bucking conventional market wisdom and relying instead on their intuition about the desires of the ecologically concerned consumer to make money at the same time that they made a better world.

**A**ll of these best-selling books share a few key themes concerning managerial motivation and skills. They all emphasize a change of mental models, directing the

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ever before. In the past 15 years, the typical adult's leisure time has shrunk by 40 percent—down from 26.6 to 16.6 hours a week. And the work week, after decades of getting shorter, is suddenly 15 percent longer." They note that "the average adult now pumps 46.8 hours per week into school, work, and commuting—way above the 40.6 hours logged in 1973." It is true that people worked 53 hours per week in 1900, whereas they now average around 39, but this number has remained fairly constant since 1945.

One reason that more Americans have not substituted leisure for work may be that most of us like our jobs. In a 1973 Roper survey, 85 percent of the respondents said that they were satisfied with their field of work, whereas only 14 percent were dissatisfied. The corresponding figures for 1980 and 1985 show virtually no change. The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) reports almost identical results in response to the question: "How satisfied are you with the work you do?" The same average percentage was up a bit in 1988, when 87 percent gave this answer. NORC has also posed a tougher question: "If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work or

would you stop working?" On average, 70 percent of the respondents questioned during the 1972–1982 period claimed that they would continue to work; the figure for 1983–1987 rose to 74 percent, and in 1988 it jumped to 85 percent. Daniel Yankelovich reports similar results.

Almost all surveys indicate that the vast majority of Americans—over 80 percent—are satisfied with their jobs. There has been no significant change in these figures over time. Many people, of course, do object to specific aspects of their jobs, complaining about boredom, pay, opportunity for advancement, the way that work is organized, and so forth.

Yankelovich reports that almost 90 percent of all American workers say that it is important to work hard; 78 percent indicate an inner need to do their very best. His research also suggests that the motives driving people to work have changed; the proportion saying that they work primarily or solely for money has declined, while the younger and better educated emphasize the expressive side of work. To summarize Yankelovich, such workers increasingly believe that work, rather than leisure, can give them what they are looking for: an outlet for self-expression as well as material rewards.

managerial mind toward concepts such as teamwork, empowerment, values, culture, intuitive thinking, and holistic viewpoints. Once seen chiefly as a technical discipline involving the hard-nosed analysis of information and the giving and receiving of orders, management now is presented as something more akin to an art—*Leadership is an Art* declares management guru Max DePree in the title of his 1989 best seller. Entrepreneurial skills are no longer to be found chiefly in the mastery of information but in the deeper recesses of the self, in the psyche and the spirit. Management is a form of self-actualization.

The definitive new element in this trend is the coupling of these culture-friendly, in-

dividualistic values with medical-therapeutic approaches to problem solving. Peter Senge, for example, suggests that organizations need to overcome a "learning disability." While none of these theories specifically calls for the kind of social-welfare therapy occurring in many large companies today, they unwittingly laid the groundwork for a therapeutic model of corporate behavior and for open-ended "human asset development."

Two other elements complete the rationale for the current corporatist approach: stress and the movement toward what is called the virtual corporation. The perception of omnipresent stress—itsself a therapeutic metaphor—is becoming a major force

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behind the new human-resource programs. Many of the new corporate nanny programs are justified on the grounds that employee stress caused by tensions on and off the job is rising. New York University Medical Center, for example, reports a 70 percent jump since 1990 in the number of managers and professionals complaining of job-related stress. Many of the corporate social-welfare programs are fill-the-gap responses to stress resulting from a wholesale breakdown of private, domestic support systems. Thus a corporate investment in child-care or mental-health services appears to make economic sense: The stressed-out worker is a less productive worker. One study in a leading journal for human-resource managers estimates that diminished productivity caused by employee stress costs business more than \$60 billion annually.

Less prominently advertised are the causes of stress that are created by the conditions of the marketplace itself. Blue-collar workers, who have since the 1970s faced the omnipresent threat of becoming obsolete and expendable, are now being joined in their state of perpetual insecurity by middle managers and others, whose ranks are steadily being thinned by corporate "re-engineering" and "rightsizing."

**D**eep organizational changes are exacerbating instability. Business is moving inexorably toward a new model of operation, the "virtual corporation." As management specialists describe it, the virtual corporation will be a legal-financial entity whose physical plant is scattered across the globe and whose people-parts are almost as interchangeable as chips in a computer motherboard. Goods and services will be produced by a movable feast of temporary global teams. Geographically limited only by the reach of a telecommunications satellite, a team of "intrapreneurs" and outsiders will be patched together for a particular project and then disbanded when their work is through. Employees will then recombine

into new teams for the next venture. A new product may be funded in Hong Kong, researched in Chicago and Japan, manufactured in Singapore, and marketed throughout the world. Economic factors being what they are (rotten and uncertain), the smart corporation will reduce its capital investment by farming out to smaller independent firms many of the functions it used to support in house, from manufacturing products to billing customers.

These trends contribute to individual uncertainty and promote a new individualism. In a flexible, unforgiving marketplace, people will need greater adaptive skills and self-confidence. The new training programs of the virtual corporation may offer a softer and more humane visage to its employees, but it will not offer any soft jobs. The successful future employee will be the person with transferable skills, high self-motivation—and no demands on the company pension plan. This is the "new deal."

The rise of nannyism, seemingly the antithesis of all that is implied by this trend toward a sink-or-swim workplace, is often justified as a rational response to the virtual corporation. Loyalty ("some degree of commitment to company purpose and community for as long as the employee works there," as Robert Waterman describes it in a recent article with two co-authors) remains important to the virtual corporation, and indeed may be at a greater premium than before. Well-educated and well-trained employees are vital to its success, and training new employees is costlier than retraining old ones. The virtual corporation cannot offer job security, but it can offer another kind of security that comes from knowing that some of one's needs will be taken care of. This response, however, is more likely to foster *dependency* among employees than self-reliance.

**I**t is far from clear that even the economic rationale for the helping programs offered by the nanny corporation makes sense. Success stories have become a staple of an ever-expanding busi-

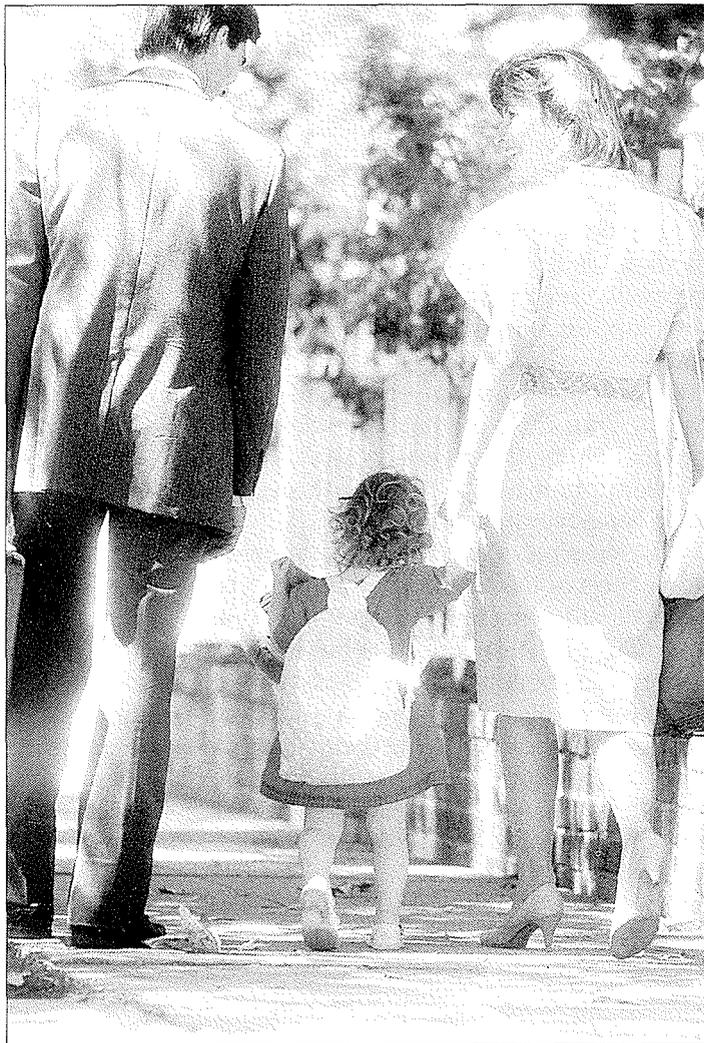
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ness press eager for sexy copy. More than once, however, journalists have quoted authorities singing the praises of such a program while neglecting to mention that the speaker served as a consultant setting it up. An extensive survey by Richard Beinecke for Boston University's Institute for the Study of Economic Culture reveals that there are far fewer demonstrated economic payoffs from these programs than is often suggested. Claims of increased productivity, for example, are often based on subjective reports by employees themselves or on crude measurements, such as changes in employee absenteeism. Workers who show up because their sick child is at the company infirmary, or who stay loyal to the company because they simply cannot find any other decent and affordable child care in town, are not necessarily the strongest employees.

And what are the costs down the road of subsidizing a seemingly endless expansion of benefits? Forget California, where already some lawyers seeking to drum up business now offer potential clients stress tests that can then be used in legal proceedings against employers. Today, more than half of the *Fortune* 1,000 companies are paying for mental-health "gatekeepers" whose job it is to put a lid on employee insurance claims for mental-health care. As child care is transformed into dependent care and the list of benefits and therapies available lengthens, the sense that there are limits to what the corporation can and should do for its employees seems,

in some quarters, in danger of disappearing altogether. After hearing a luncheon speech on the health benefits of drinking water recently, one well-intentioned manager promptly purchased 2,000 water carafes to be placed on the desks of the corporate clerical staff.

**C**ompany-subsidized programs may also carry hidden costs for the rest of society. As corporations put more and more money into child-care programs for their employees, what will



*Off to work we go? Corporate day care subsidies are common; on-site care is rare.*

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happen to the quality of the services available to others? Will the corporate programs sop up the best labor, for example, leaving second-rate child-care workers to tend the children of those outside the charmed corporate circle? Or consider an in-house fitness center, many of whose basic costs (such as space) can be easily and nearly invisibly subsidized through balance sheet complexities. Will the private health club that serves all comers be able to compete?

Most disturbing of all is the distant specter of a society in which many people receive important social benefits from their companies and thus see no need to provide for the have-nots through publicly funded programs or voluntaristic means. Or perhaps people who have reoriented their private lives toward the corporation will find the duties and demands of citizenship in the larger community beside the point. Today's health-care debate suggests that such concerns are not completely far-fetched. Opinion polls consistently show broad but shallow support for change, in large part because those already insured (disproportionately employees of large organizations) are happy with their own arrangements. For better or worse, the expected groundswell of public support needed to push through reform has never materialized.

Discussion of such real and potential downsides of the new corporate nannyism are generally considered taboo. But there are alternatives. All of the new benefits cost money—for example, money that comes directly out of salaries. Why not consider paying employees more, giving them the means (and the freedom) to decide on their own how to deal with their personal problems and challenges?

**E**very juncture of the new flexible work force and the new caring corporation is a tension point of contradictory expectations. The first is the tension between job insecurity and stress relief. Many features of the new humanism

in employee relations stem from a perception that stress is rising, not only among employees but in the institutions of public and private life. But a good deal of that stress is caused by the corporation itself, particularly in its inchoate vision of the temporary employee contract and its continued celebration of macho (male and female) workaholics who constantly sacrifice their personal and family lives to the demands of the job.

**T**he ministrations of the nanny corporation can inadvertently worsen the very problems they seek to address. The in-house child-care program, rationalized as a means to relieve stress, promote diversity, and retain employees, may provide an excuse to work managers even longer. After all, now there is no need to worry about the children. Meanwhile, with family life reduced to a few hours of private time a week, other forms of social stress begin to emerge. Where else but to the humane corporation would a dependent employee turn for help? Down the road, the parent of older children finds that he or she has made career decisions that require a commitment of time that leaves no room for attending to the many needs of, say, preteens who are too old for child-care but too young to drive themselves to music lessons or soccer practice. What is the corporation going to do now?

The second tension springs from the dismemberment of existing communities inside (and outside) the corporation and the attempt to create a virtual corporation. Interchangeable gypsy job teams and portfolio careers will continue to undercut a sense of community in companies. The future corporation is said to depend on teamwork. The employer-employee contract, however, encourages self-aggrandizing career strategies. Nomadic managers, with no home in a single corporation, will have little motivation to compromise or sacrifice unless there is a negotiated, guaranteed payback in ad-

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vance for Number One. Even their duties as citizens will have to be regulated by the corporation. Many communities today, for example, increasingly rely on help from public-private partnerships spearheaded by managers who "volunteer" their time for the public good only after the company guarantees in advance that their service will bring them later career benefits.

The third tension is the nearly utopian promotion of individualism, self-actualization, and empowerment at the same time that teamwork, tolerance, and communication are emphasized. This tension will only be exacerbated if boundaries between private and corporate life continue to blur. As employees' personal identity, family life, and physical habits are increasingly "commodified" into performance issues, and as growing numbers of employees are regarded as permanently impermanent in the organization, calls for a new humaneness and self-actualization will ring more and more hollow. Widespread cynicism and disloyalty are likely results—a particularly volatile combination when mixed with the

hyper-individualism of the virtual corporation.

Ultimately, the issues raised by the emergence of the new corporatism are questions of personal and collective character. The danger is that what seems a rational response to genuine problems in our society may in the end only raise those problems to a new pitch of urgency. New management doctrines that seek to make a virtue out of constant instability and insecurity will put the cynical, self-aggrandizing, hyper-individualistic character type that afflicts us today on a new footing and promote its spread. Meanwhile, the nanny corporation's protective cocoon for the chosen can only reduce our already diminished sense of citizenship and public responsibility. Historically, democratic capitalism has promoted a sense of mutuality, trust, and self-restraint among individuals, and it relies on these qualities for its continued survival. If the corporation now adds to the forces undermining them, these virtues may not hold.

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## CURRENT BOOKS

### Conservatism at Wit's End

**DEAD RIGHT.** By David Frum. *New Republic/Basic Books*. 256 pp. \$23

The conservatism that came to dominate the Republican Party during the Reagan era was an amalgam of ideas, a brilliant philosophical cut-and-paste job aimed at satisfying the various groups that might come together to produce a national political majority. But like most cut-and-paste jobs, this one could cohere for only so long. David Frum, who has strong conservative credentials (including past service as an editorial page editor of the *Wall Street Journal*), offers a fresh explanation for why conservatism broke down during the Reagan-Bush era. Unlike many contemporary conservative intellectuals and pundits, Frum resists blindly celebrating Ronald Reagan or demonizing George Bush. Nor does he blame only the Democrats for deficits and big government. Instead, Frum forces conservatives to confront their contradictions and failures, both of thought and of deed, and then offers his allies a more rigorous philosophical program for future action.

Until the 1950s, America had no self-consciously conservative intellectual movement. It had long had a conservative disposition, traceable to the writings of Edmund Burke, the Federalists Alexander Hamilton and John Adams, and the southern Bourbons and aristocrats. After World War II, two sets of ideas emerged that came to be known as "conservative." On the one side was "traditionalism," which was rooted in an old-fashioned reverence for family, neighborhood, and the values passed on through generations. This conservatism was pessimistic, or perhaps realistic, about human nature. It was, in any event, without illusions about the destruction human beings could unleash absent the guidance of religion and the constraints imposed by families and communities. Two of the more impor-

tant traditionalist prophets were Russell Kirk, whose book *The Conservative Mind* (1953) played a major role in the postwar conservative revival, and sociologist Robert Nisbet, author of *The Quest for Community* (1952), which is now popular among those attempting to stage a new revival on the right. Traditionalists were critical of modern liberalism's veneration of the national state over localism and of its willingness to let social experimentation run roughshod over settled values and customs. As Frum explains, traditionalists often supported the free-market economy as a superior alternative to centralized state power, but they did not revere the market and were sometimes critical of its workings. Markets alone did not create values, virtue, or social order. To traditionalists, conservatives who said that adults should be free to trade pornography in the open marketplace were not true conservatives: They did not value the truly important things.

The other school of conservatism that arose after the war proceeded from different assumptions. Libertarian conservatives were animated less by worries over the destruction of old values than by a fear of the overweening modern state. In many ways libertarians were simply classical liberals who used John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, and John Stuart Mill to justify their faith in a minimal state. To libertarians, the market was everything, or almost everything. Friedrich von Hayek, the great architect of modern libertarianism, argued that any level of central economic planning could lead to totalitarianism, since planning inevitably centralized power in the hands of a small group claiming special authority based on alleged expertise. Some libertarians extended their critique of the state to the military; others came to justify an assertive American foreign policy in the name of containing communism. But to all of them, the rights of

the individual, not reverence for tradition, occupied the hallowed place in politics.

After World War II, the simultaneous rise of these two varieties of conservatism posed a direct challenge to what was called the American liberal consensus. The contradictory strains of conservatism were able to come together because they shared a common enemy: President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The job of conservative journalists and philosophers was to paper over the intellectual differences between the two sides. This was done brilliantly by the writers whom William F. Buckley, Jr., had drawn to the *National Review*, particularly Frank Meyer, a former Communist who wrote a regular column on conservative doctrine. It was Meyer who coined the term "fusionism" to describe the linking of the two philosophies. Meyer's insight was that the United States was, at heart, a traditionalist society. Therefore, American conservatives could use libertarian means to traditionalist ends. To dismantle big government was to empower family, church, and neighborhood.

For all its problems, fusionism carried conservatives right through the Reagan Revolution and provided Ronald Reagan with his basic principles. It is notable that Reagan's own practice of conservative politics was remarkably free of the resentments and angers that characterized significant segments of the right wing, most especially Joe McCarthy, George Wallace, and (depending on what face he was putting on his politics) Richard Nixon. Reagan almost never indulged in the "paranoid style" that is ascribed to what came to be called the New Right, although it, too, was part of his winning coalition. Fusionism worked for the conservative movement as long as there was a visible liberal enemy to



route—a national government seen as both a meddler and a purveyor of bad values. It continued to work for a while under Reagan as long as the economy grew and produced "Morning in America."

But sometime during Reagan's second term fusionism's happy synthesis began to break down, and the hard questions had to be confronted. Did liberty matter more than virtue, freedom more than tradition? Or was it the other way around? What about abortion? Was this an issue about personal liberty, as most libertarians would have it, or about morality, as traditionalists insisted? And what were conservatism's priorities? During the Reagan years, tax cuts took priority over school prayer and a host of other traditionalist issues. Yet the defense build-up was more important than smaller, more frugal government, and winning elections took priority over seriously trimming the welfare state. And what if the American people weren't as traditional as Meyer thought them to be? What if the rate of out-of-wedlock births kept rising under conservative rule, which is what happened in the Reagan years? What if violent crime went up, as it also did? And how could an increasingly fractured alliance hold together if economic times went bad, as they

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eventually did after George Bush took over?

The fact that Reaganism blew up not during Reagan's presidency but during George Bush's led conservatives to the obvious strategy: Blame Bush First. Frum, to his credit, will have none of this. His central thesis is that conservatism failed right off under Reagan because conservatives lost their nerve—or never really found it. They lost their nerve because they understood, even without always admitting it, that the voters rather liked government:

However heady the 1980s may have looked to everyone else, they were for conservatives a testing and disillusioning time. Conservatives owned the executive branch for eight years and had great influence over it for four more; they dominated the Senate for six years; and by the end of the decade they exercised near complete control over the federal judiciary. And yet, every time they reached to undo the work of Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon—the work they had damned for nearly half a century—they felt the public's eyes upon them. They didn't dare, and they realized that they didn't dare. Their moment came and flickered.

Particularly disconcerting, Frum notes, was the fact that programs with conservative constituencies—farmers, veterinarians, the elderly, for example—increased greatly during the Reagan presidency. Frum concludes that “the conservatives who had lived through that attack of faintheartedness shamefacedly felt they had better hurry up and find something else to talk about.”

Frum sees three major strains of conservatism competing to replace (or revive) Reaganism. The closest to pure Reaganism are the “optimists” gathered around Jack Kemp, whom Frum describes as “wrong but wromantic.” Frum praises Kemp for his openness, but questions how his firm commitment to lower tax rates squares with his equally staunch support for programs to improve the inner city. The “moralists,” well represented

by William Bennett, want to instill virtue in the citizenry, but they don't always see the contradictions involved in condemning big government and hoping nonetheless that the state can promote virtue. The “nationalists,” foremost among them Pat Buchanan, share many of Bennett's attitudes on moral issues but would take conservatism in a very different direction—protectionist on trade, isolationist on foreign policy, and aggressive in defense of the interests and values of the white middle class. In pursuit of their own version of “left-wing identity politics,” Frum notes, the Buchanans are “truly multiculturalism's children.”

Frum proposes a profoundly different, largely libertarian, path and seems to be willing to lose elections if that is what it takes to be consistent. He wants conservatives to make the case for lean government—in both the economic and the social realms—knowing that this case will not always be popular. He does not, like Meyer, believe that Americans are inherently traditional. But he argues that smaller government can promote virtue, or at least certain virtues—among them frugality, hard work, and self-control—by forcing individuals to rely on their own resources. In Frum's view, the welfare state has become the largest enemy of virtue.

Frum's suggestion is certainly more intellectually rigorous than much of what passes from the lips of most conservative politicians. But while he admits that government remains a popular force, what he can't fully acknowledge is that government is popular for sound reasons. The democratic alternatives to conservatism—New Dealism and social democracy—have endured despite numerous practical difficulties and intellectual inconsistencies because majorities in most free electorates simply do not accept that market outcomes are automatically blessed. Free markets are useful and practical but not sanctified. If the market does not make health care affordable or available to all, voters will eventually come around to demanding it from government. That is why Medicare was passed. It's also why polls

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show that despite President Clinton's problems on health care, most Americans favor government action to guarantee coverage for everyone. Voters may criticize government in the abstract, but they will turn to it to keep the air and water clean, the streets safe, and poor children fed.

Similarly, people value the communities that traditionalist conservatives so extol, but they also recognize that such communities can be disrupted or destroyed by economic change. So, in the name of conservative values, those who treasure these communities often turn to the state for protection or relief. What the moderate Left has always understood—and what conservatives usually try to deny—is that capitalism, in effect, socializes its problems. The state steps in to resolve difficulties

that capitalism can't. Where there is no money to be made, capitalism moves on. Government necessarily cleans up after it.

Political debate in the United States would certainly be more bracing if conservatives followed Frum's formula, for he proposes a clear contest between those who believe in government and those who do not. But I doubt very much that a majority will rally to his cause. Even among conservatives, as Frum well knows, the minimal state is destined to be a very hard sell.

—E. J. Dionne, Jr., a Wilson Center Fellow, is a columnist for the Washington Post, and is the author of *Why Americans Hate Politics* (1991).

## The Revenge of Nationalism

**BLOOD AND BELONGING:** Journeys into the New Nationalism. By Michael Ignatieff. Farrar, Strauss. 263 pp. \$21

**THE FUTURE OF GERMAN DEMOCRACY.** Ed. by Robert Gerald Livingston and Volkmar Sander. Continuum. 168 pp. \$19.95

**CIVIL WARS:** From L.A. to Bosnia. By Hans Magnus Enzensberger. New Press. 144 pp. \$18

Until recently, it was fashionable in many academic and some political circles to assert that nationalism was finished. Indeed, for nearly two decades, a number of influential historians and social scientists on both sides of the Atlantic argued that nations had precious little to do with ethnicity or territory, that the symbols of nationhood—stamps, flags, national anthems—were old stage props dusted off for use in the

"invention of tradition." A nation was really little more than a social "construct" of fairly recent manufacture, an "imagined community" that was now destined for the rubbish heap of history. What the future held in store was a global community in which civilized, multiethnic societies would peacefully coexist.

The post-Cold War era has therefore come as something of a shock. To be sure, the most distinguishing characteristic of the new world disorder has been the disintegration of nation-states. But the process has in no way resembled what the imagined-communities scholars imagined. From Bosnia to Somalia, territorial demands have led to ethnic cleansing and mass refugee flights—hardly a basis for global harmony and peace. Even the dream of a single, federalist Europe run by bureaucrats sitting in Brussels has been shattered by

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an upsurge in nationalist sentiment and the persistence of distinct cultural identities. In the old Soviet Union, the Communists had attempted to create a supranational state based on ideology, a vast bureaucracy, flags, war films, and parades. But beneath the veneer of Soviet brotherhood, the old nationalist passions continued to smolder. Their decisive eruption in 1989 perhaps best demonstrated the flimsiness of the social-construction theories: Nations do seem to have old and enduring connections with an ethnic (or tribal) identity, and the thirst for national self-determination cannot easily be quenched.

The return of nationalism has triggered a fresh series of studies whose authors seek to understand the phenomenon rather than to deny its existence. One of the most probing and sprightly works to date is Michael Ignatieff's *Blood and Belonging*. Ignatieff, the author of *The Russian Album* (1987), among other books, is a keen observer and graceful writer. The work at hand, which is based on a series on nationalism produced for the BBC, combines historical analysis with an account of his travels to Croatia, Germany, Ukraine, Quebec, Kurdistan, and Northern Ireland. A self-described cosmopolitan who grew up in Canada, studied in the United States, and taught in Britain, Ignatieff aims neither to decry nor to praise nationalism. Instead, he seeks to dissect it. Unfortunately, as his book progresses, Ignatieff becomes mired in his own artificial distinctions and contradictory definitions.

The birth of the nation-state is often traced to the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years' War. The treaty recognized the right of rulers to determine the religion of their subjects and marked the rise of a new European state system dominated by France, England, Austria, and Russia. Religious wars were replaced by wars over the balance of power among nations.

In the 19th century, irredentist movements sprang up all over Europe, most powerfully among the various German-speaking statelets and principalities. After Napoleon's invasion and occupation of these lands in 1806,

philosopher Johann Fichte and other German writers began to espouse the notion of a cultural and ethnic nation—the nation as representing the *Volk*. As Ignatieff notes, "All the peoples of 19th-century Europe under imperial subjection—the Poles and Baltic peoples under the Russian yoke, the Serbs under Turkish rule, the Croats under the Hapsburgs—looked to the German ideal of ethnic nationalism when articulating their right to self-determination." When Germany, under Prussian guidance, achieved unification in 1871 and rose to world power status, "it was a demonstration of the success of ethnic nationalism to the rest of Europe."

**T**hough Ignatieff does not mention it, Germany's peaceful reunification in 1989 again served as a model for some of the Balkan peoples. The Slovenians and Croats, whose independence Germany recognized in 1991, were partly emulating Germany's own claim to self-determination. Moreover, as Ignatieff does make clear, the viciousness of the Serb war against the Slovenians, Croats, and Bosnians is not the product of a warped conscience peculiar to the Balkans but "stems in part from a pathetic longing to be good Europeans—that is, to import the West's murderous ideological fashions."

But Germany's quest for self-determination remains troubled. While the fall of the Berlin Wall resolved the country's territorial status, it reopened the question of a German identity. In the essays collected in *The Future of German Democracy*, authors ranging from the former chancellor Helmut Schmidt to the novelist Günter Grass attempt to tackle this question. Many of the essays stress that the unexpected collapse of the East German regime helps to account for the political turbulence Germany is now experiencing. West Germans—not East Germans—had become habituated to partition. "Americans hardly noticed at the time that among many [West] Germans . . . enthusiasm for unity was very faint," observes Robert Gerald Livingston, director of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies.

As a consequence, some former East Ger-

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mans feel the need to assert their Germanness. As historian Heinrich-August Winkler describes it, "Aggressive behavior towards foreigners and especially the socially weakest among them" is a way of proving that one is a real German. But the problem is even more complex. All Germans will have to come to terms with the idea of living in a multicultural society. The leading Christian Democratic politician, Heiner Geissler, is on the mark when he declares that "the people in Germany will have to be told in the future they will be living with more, not fewer, foreigners." The challenge for the Germans, as for other European peoples, is to reconcile traditional notions of nationhood with the influx of refugees and immigrants from Africa and Asia.

The far greater challenge, though, lies in grappling with ethnic upsurges in places such as Bosnia and Rwanda. For Ignatieff, the key is to distinguish between ethnic and civic nationalism. Like Harvard University sociologist Liah Greenfeld, who introduced this distinction in her monumental book *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992), Ignatieff cites Britain as the first country to develop a healthy and sound civic nationalism. Ignatieff concedes that Britain was dominated by the English but stresses that it successfully combined other traditions—Welsh, Scottish, if not Irish—with the development of democratic institutions. Most important, Britain, unlike Germany, never made blood and ethnicity the criterion for legal citizenship. Under civic nationalism, says Ignatieff, citizenship is based on sworn loyalty to a constitution, and differences between individuals are respected. Ethnic nationalism, by contrast, insists on the link between ethnicity and nation, and on the exclusion of outsiders. Ironically, ethnic nationalism often takes its most virulent form when the differences between two peoples are most minute.

Yet this division between ethnic and civic nationalism is a bit too tidy. In reality, the two often shade into each other. Britain and other civic nations are scarcely immune to the ethnic tensions that trouble other societies. Canada, for example, represents Ignatieff's perfect civic nation: It allows its minorities a wide assortment of rights through a democratic structure. In Quebec,

French is spoken everywhere; not even signs can display in English. Moreover, alone among Canadian provinces, Quebec has the right to recruit only French-speaking immigrants. Yet the Quebecois still insist on sovereignty. "A state is the only way to protect the identity of a people, you know," says Claude Beland, the leading Quebec banker. "Identity I define as the harmony between your values and your actions." Quebec highlights the insatiable character of nationalism: It perceives threats where none exist.

In truth, Ignatieff's notion of civic nationalism is something of an oxymoron. No real nationalist can be bought off with an amorphous promise of democratic rights. Oppressed people such as the Kurds scarcely know what the term means. And why should they? Even the United States is not a perfect civic nation. Despite its universalist claims, the United States was led from its origins until the 1960s by a largely Anglo-Saxon elite. The ideal of the melting pot was not to create a multicultural society, but rather to integrate immigrants into the existing Anglo-Saxon American culture. As the wars over multiculturalism and affirmative action indicate, the breakdown of Anglo-American dominance triggered a new struggle over the ethnic definition of the United States that remains unresolved.

**I**n fact, as Hans Magnus Enzensberger observes in *Civil Wars*, the same bloody impulses that have manifested themselves in Bosnia are turning up in Los Angeles. Enzensberger, Germany's leading literary and political critic, observes at the outset of his book that most varieties of modern nationalism have to be distinguished from their 19th-century predecessor. Most nationalists of our time more closely resemble armed mobs than heroic guerrillas. Their goal is not to create a nation but to revel in sheer destruction. In a horrifying vignette, Enzensberger tells of an armed band destroying a hospital in Mogadishu. Far from being a military operation, it was wanton violence. The perpetrators slit open beds and smashed x-ray machines and oxygen generators, even though they knew that they might need the facilities them-

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selves within hours. No matter. "In the collective running amok," notes Enzensberger, "the concept of 'future' disappears."

Unfortunately, the future seems to hold a good deal more such "nationalism" in store. The most recent manifestation came in Rwanda, where the Hutus slaughtered the Tutsis while the Western nations wrung their hands. Indeed, these ethnic upsurges pose a particular challenge to the West. The confusion was perhaps best illustrated when, toward the end of the Cold War, the United States actively sought to perpetuate the existence of the Soviet empire for fear of East European nationalist desires. President George Bush went to rather extensive lengths to prop up Mikhail Gorbachev's ailing regime, and his recognition of the new Baltic countries was notably reluctant. The Baltic states, however, did not represent ethnic groups bent on exterminating one another; they were countries seeking to recover, not establish, their right to self-determination.

The question of national self-determination will continue to present an all-but-intractable problem for the West, both in domestic politics and in international dealings. Even something that looks as innocent as multiculturalism has its own explosive potential for separating communities rather than creating broad ethnic harmonies. The problems are no less complex in non-Western countries. Per-

haps instead of drawing artificial distinctions between civic and ethnic nationalism, scholars might usefully draw contrasts among three varieties of ethnic nationalism: the one that represents legitimate aspirations for independence in response to oppression by an imperial power (as in the case of the Baltic states), the one that represents illegitimate claims based on spurious grievances (see Quebec), and the one that represents nothing more than warlords bent on ethnic cleansing (as in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia). The first should be encouraged, the second should be shunned, and the last should not even be dignified with the label "nationalist."

Given the horrors of Rwanda and Bosnia, it is understandable that the authors of these three books view the concept of nationalism with apprehension. But in finally taking nationalism seriously, these writers risk making the same mistake as the imagined-community scholars. Both sides ignore the positive aspect of nationalism. The Baltic states, the Czech Republic, Hungary—these represent the successes of nationalism. They provide room for a cautious optimism.

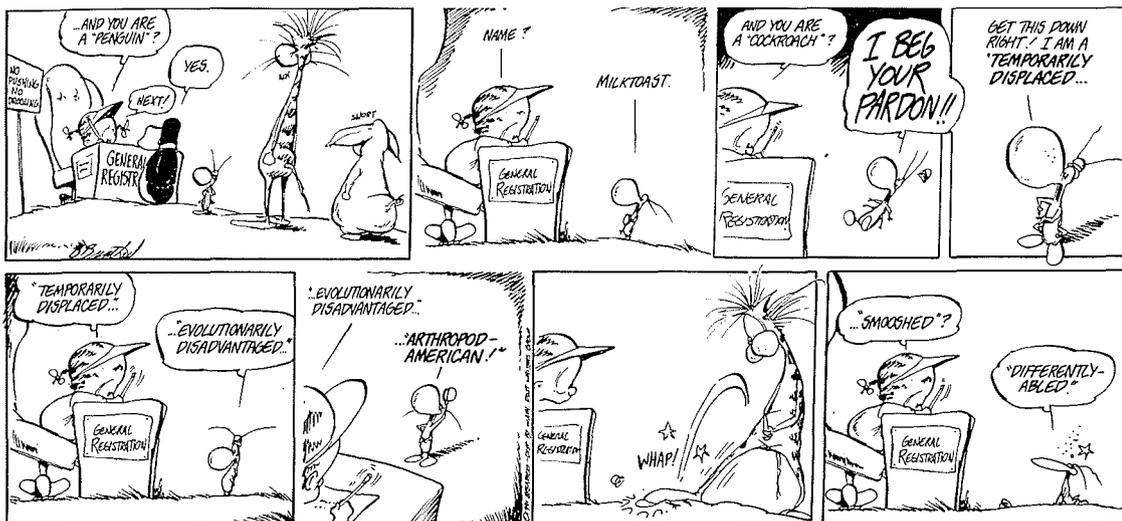
—Jacob Heilbrunn is University Fellow at the Center for German and European Studies at Georgetown University.

## Beyond Multiculturalism

**DICTATORSHIP OF VIRTUE:** Multiculturalism and the Battle for America's Future. By Richard Bernstein. Knopf. 367 pp. \$25

New York Times correspondent Richard Bernstein, who at one time reported from France, believes that America's current battles over multicul-

turalism are "the *dérâpage* [rough translation: the "slippery slope"] of the civil rights movement." Just as Robespierre's insistence on virtue led to terror, Bernstein cautions, so the campaign to root out racism and sexism in school is the first step on the road to Maoist-style thought control. (Bernstein also worked in China.)



Bernstein certainly finds enough examples to justify his alarm. At the University of New Hampshire, a writing instructor's illustration of a simile—"belly-dancing is like jello on a plate with a vibrator under the plate"—was defined as sexual harassment by university bureaucrats, in part because of methods of investigation that "bear a chilling resemblance to those of true dictatorships." The University of Pennsylvania tells students that if "you are perceived to be racist, sexist, heterosexist, ethnocentric, biased against those with religions different from yours, or intolerant of disabilities, you must be willing to examine and change that behavior." The Modern Language Association asserts that describing feminist scholarship as "partisan," "narrow," or "lacking in rigor" can be defined as "anti-feminist harassment." Figures compiled by the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence include, as examples of "ethnoviolence" a letter from a white student claiming that Louis Farrakhan is a bigot and a campus newspaper article that claimed that "many black students gained entrance into universities they were neither qualified nor prepared to attend."

In Bernstein's view, the multicultural police—academic reformers charged with implementing affirmative action policies and complying with feminist concerns—are ambitious,

power-seeking, and ruthless. Most disturbing, they have come to dominate academia as a kind of "bureaucracy of the good." Convinced of their virtue, they are intolerant of those who disagree with them and oblivious to anyone else's rights. "The whole point of the liberal revolution that gave rise to the 1960s was to free us from somebody else's dogma," Bernstein writes, "but now the very same people who fought for personal liberation a generation ago are striving to impose on others a secularized religion involving a set of values and codes that they believe in, disguising it behind innocuous labels like 'diversity training' and 'respect for difference.' "

Not only are the multiculturalists authoritarian, says Bernstein, but they are also hypocritical. They actually detest traditional cultures. They want everyone to speak in one tongue—the language of the Left (which, ironically, is Western and hegemonic). And they hate the one country, the United States, that has done more than any other to make diversity real.

Bernstein's indictment has been heard before. (How many times do we have to hear that the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women distorted statistics on the failure of young girls in school?) But his account of academia run amok differs from others by

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offering an explanation of how this peculiar situation has come to pass. The story of multiculturalism, in his words, is really a story about generations.

Bernstein relates the life of Gizella Braun, who, like my grandparents, arrived in the United States from Hungary in 1920. Awful things happened to Braun: near deportation, her husband's death when the children were young, a loveless second marriage, the Great Depression. Good things did too: assimilation, prosperity, successful children. How is this story of the struggles of a typical immigrant different from what is happening now? It isn't. "What has changed is our attitude toward ourselves, our unwillingness to see the American identity as worthy enough to expect newcomers to adopt it as their own."

Generations on either side of Gizella Braun have little sense of what genuine diversity means. Before America began to experience mass immigration in the late 19th century, elites were content to imagine America as a culturally uniform Protestant republic. Today's multicultural police also strive for uniformity. They want everyone to conform to their own deeply ingrained views of what true racial and sexual equality resembles: living in one well-sensitized "harmonious garden," as Bernstein puts it. Indeed, although they deify diversity and globalization, they really don't seem to understand it. They are American innocents bewildered by real-world difference.

**T**oday, near the Queens neighborhood that Gizella Braun made home, live hundreds of thousands of immigrants from all parts of the world. It was, ironically, members of these "minority groups" who opposed the efforts of the New York City Board of Education to teach respect for gay lifestyles throughout the public school curriculum. "We came [to the school board meeting] saying that God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve," one black minister told Bernstein. Queens is a place where the desire to "make it" often comes into conflict with a suspicion of change—but neither of these at-

titudes is acceptable to the multiculturalists. Many recent arrivers, for instance, desperately want to hold on to their religious beliefs but know full well that coming to America means that their children may abandon the faith. By dismissing the more traditional views of many immigrants and treating them collectively as "people of color," the multiculturalists pave over real diversity in favor of a uniformity that exists only in their political fantasies.

Moreover, as Bernstein shows, these immigrants see themselves as victims neither of American imperialism nor of middle-class values. They take rather quickly to American culture. Bilingual education drives them up the wall. Their great fear is not discrimination but crime. Yet the multiculturalists, in their contempt for "bourgeois" aspirations and values, come dangerously close to depriving recent arrivals of the very advantages that enabled the multiculturalists themselves to rise to power in universities and foundations.

*Dictatorship of Virtue* tells a powerful story, even if Bernstein's reporting is often sloppy. (Glenn Loury is an economist at Boston University, not a sociologist at Boston College.) Moreover, for reasons that make little sense, Bernstein concludes that the multiculturalists have won the war. Their rhetoric, he writes, "has the rest of us on the run, unable to respond for fear of being branded uncultural, or racist." The rebellious disenchantment of the 1960s may not have had that much of an impact on the national mood. After all, Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980. But, according to Bernstein, it did have a remarkable impact on elite institutions such as universities, the media, and foundations—all places where multiculturalism thrives. This triumph constitutes a "secret victory" for those who would install a dictatorship of virtue in the United States. They protest their powerlessness, but it is they "who have come to determine much of the moral tone, the orthodoxies, and the taboos of life in the 1990s."

To be sure, there is a problem here, and not just at universities. An obsession with victimization, a fear of elitism, and a penchant for

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equality of outcomes are distinctive features of recent American experience. Perhaps the crowning achievement of this perspective is the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990—which forces many businesses to accommodate a wide variety of mental and physical conditions—for it puts the stamp of approval of a Republican president (George Bush) on the idea of using government to enforce a multiculturalist ideal. But the war is hardly over. After all, who won the crucial battles Bernstein himself describes?

**H**is fascinating account of a writing requirement at the University of Texas that would substitute rank political indoctrination for English composition is the story of how that proposal *lost*. What made efforts to dumb down the public school curriculum in Brookline, Massachusetts (in order to de-emphasize European history) so noteworthy, as Bernstein notes, is the fact that so many parents fought back and *won*. New York City had to drop the idea of teaching first graders about sex, and the superintendent was

forced to resign. If Bernstein really believed the war was over, his book would not be as highly spirited as it is—nor would there be so many other similar books.

*Dictatorship of Virtue* is certainly the best of the anti-p.c. critiques. However, it may be precisely this type of overheated counterattack that is getting in the way right now. Bernstein says he doesn't want to be "melodramatic," but he is. He knows that "we are not in danger of the guillotine," yet he can't resist the analogy. Concluding, he writes: "The time has come for liberals to recapture the high ground from the demagogues of diversity, to declare their diversity fake, fraudulent, superstitious, cranky, sanctimonious, monotonous." Actually, that time has passed. The time now is for a sober discussion. If education remains the best path to a life of reason, intelligence, and faith in merit—the story of Gizella Braun—then a less hyperbolic, more nuanced debate ought to be the next step.

—Alan Wolfe is University Professor and professor of sociology at Boston University.

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## OTHER TITLES

### *Contemporary Affairs*

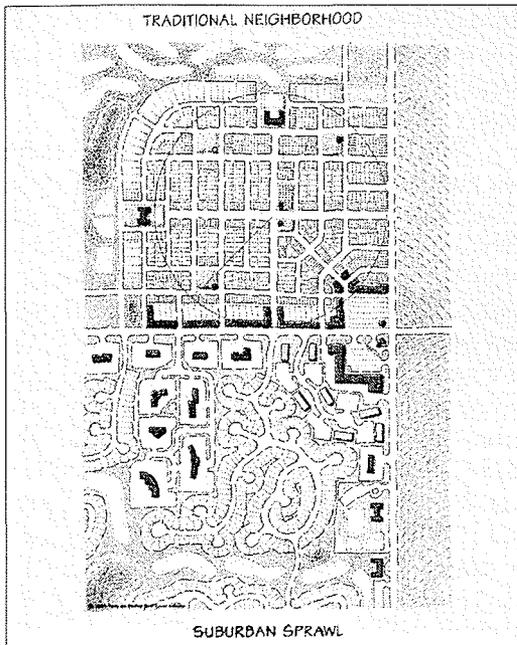
**A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE:** Reshaping the American Suburb. By Philip Langdon. Univ. of Mass. 288 pp. \$29.95

**THE NEW URBANISM:** Toward an Architecture of Community. By Peter Katz. McGraw-Hill. 245 pp. \$49.95

What may be most astonishing about the vast suburban landscape created in America during the past 50 years is not its scandalous ugliness or its protean vigor, but the fact that it was built virtually without benefit of town planning. America's town-planning tradition, older than the nation itself, perished when its

practitioners retired or died during the long post-1929 construction standstill of depression and war. The postwar generation of designers and architects, steeped in European modernism, regarded the old town planning as quaint and viewed the American desire to live in a single-family house surrounded by a green lawn with disdainful incredulity. So by and large they decided—with the happy concurrence of developers and many public authorities—to have nothing to do with suburbia. Instead, they chose to mastermind urban renewal and other disastrous schemes in the cities.

Today, the New Urbanist planners and architects, led by the Miami-based husband-wife team of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-



Zyberk, are struggling to revive the American town-planning tradition. The essence of the New Urbanist idea is conveyed by Katz's subtitle: *Toward an Architecture of Community*. The New Urbanists argue that most of the postwar suburb's key features, from its broad roads to its generous setback requirements, work against the constant chance contacts between strangers needed to create a public realm. The remedy, say the New Urbanists, is in the plan: Build houses close to the street and closer together. Lay the streets out in a grid so that people can walk from one place to another. Narrow roads to slow down the cars. Mix housing types so that the mechanic can rent an apartment over the doctor's detached garage and the empty nesters can leave their five-bedroom house for a smaller place without departing for a distant retirement community. Most of these ideas are presented with textbook clarity by Langdon, a journalist who writes frequently about architecture.

So far, the signal New Urbanist accomplishment has been Duany and Plater-Zyberk's acclaimed community of Seaside, Florida, where construction began in 1981. Peter Calthorpe's Laguna West is being built on 1,000 acres outside Sacramento, California, and on the draw-

ing boards is Playa Vista, a planned community in Los Angeles designed by Elizabeth Moule and Stefanos Polyzoides. These and nearly two dozen other stunning New Urbanist communities—many still only in the planning stages—can be seen in Katz's lavishly illustrated book, which also includes brief essays by several New Urbanist leaders.

Yale University's Vincent Scully, the movement's *eminence grise*, concedes in the Katz volume that "New Suburbanism" might be a more accurate name for the movement. It is not that the group neglects cities but that "the *new* theme that links these projects is the redesign of that vast area in which most Americans now live." The critics who complain that the New Urbanists do not offer solutions to the problems of the inner cities are themselves heirs to a modernist tradition that, as Scully notes, helped destroy the city and that now has practically nothing to offer either cities or suburbs. (Both the New Urbanists and their critics, one might add, seem to be naive about the capacity of good design to overcome deeply rooted social problems.) There are other challenges to the New Urbanists' ideas: Do Americans really *want* to live together in towns? How do the planners propose to repair the thousands of square miles of suburban sprawl already in existence? Perhaps, however, it is too much to ask them to make up overnight for 50 years of lost time. Americans are continuing to surge into suburbia, and the New Urbanists have the only fresh ideas about how to shape the world they will make there.

**RACE AND CULTURE: A World View.** By Thomas Sowell. Basic. 331 pp. \$25

When European and Lebanese businessmen competed with each other in the cities and towns of 18th-century colonial West Africa, the Lebanese won hands down. In Malaysia during the 19th century, Chinese workers sapped trees on rubber plantations at twice the rate of the natives. Soldiers of German ancestry have commanded armies under Russian czars and American presidents. Most of today's mainstream social scientists can explain none of this, says Sowell, an

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economist and senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. They spend too much time, he charges, analyzing "initial conditions" that don't affect results and "advantages" that don't really exist. "Whenever group A outperforms group B in any given set of circumstances," notes Sowell, "those circumstances are said to 'favor' group A."

But this kind of thinking obscures genuine differences in "cultural capital": "the specific skills, general work habits, saving propensities, and attitudes toward education and entrepreneurship" possessed by different cultural groups, Sowell says. The Lebanese, for instance, entered West African markets with far less financial capital than did the Europeans. But they chose to live meagerly, save money, and employ their entire families. They became more familiar with their customers and were better able to bargain and extend lines of credit. In short, culturally shaped behavior was the key: "The Europeans simply did not choose to subject themselves to many of the conditions which the Lebanese endured."

Sowell calls on researchers to start "regarding groups as having their own internal cultural patterns, antedating the environment in which they currently find themselves and transcending the beliefs, biases, and decisions of others." The reason scholars tend not to, says Sowell, is twofold. First, most social scientists fail to apply an international perspective to their work. A one-country analysis might examine Chinese retailers in Jamaica and suggest that they prospered for reasons peculiar to Jamaica. But that fails to account for similar kinds of Chinese success in Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

More important, Sowell believes, scholars have an "understandable revulsion" toward admitting that "some ways of doing things—some cultures—are better in some respects than others." Relativism continues to reign in the academy. Yet Sowell argues that some cultures are clearly more suited to certain economic roles than are others.

Through copious examples gathered from around the world, *Race and Culture* makes a strong case for "the reality, persistence, and consequences of cultural differences." So the book

succeeds at complicating a debate in which all differences in group performance are now automatically written off as consequences of politics or prejudice. Unfortunately, Sowell can be just as tendentious in his argumentation as the social scientists he criticizes. Perhaps most prominently, he essentially dismisses the impact of racial discrimination on a group's economic success. Where discrimination exists, he argues, it must reflect real differences in group productivity—an argument that ignores mounds of evidence to the contrary. Coupled with his familiar diatribes against affirmative action and multiculturalism, this sort of selective fact finding makes the book at times read more like a polemic than a serious scholarly study.

### *Philosophy & Religion*

**THE THERAPY OF DESIRE:** Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics. *By Martha C. Nussbaum. Princeton. 558 pp. \$29.95*

A health-care plan drawn up by Martha Nussbaum would surely cover visits to philosophers. They are the mind's doctors—or at least they once were. That they are no longer so, and that systems of philosophy hold little interest today for anyone outside the academy, is one measure of our distance from the Hellenistic period (from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. to the suicide of Cleopatra VII in 31 B.C.), when the question "How should one live?" drove the philosophical enterprise and the answer mattered equally to aristocrat and slave.

Nussbaum, a professor of philosophy, classics, and comparative literature at Brown University, begins her ambitious and impressive book with Aristotle, who accepted the idea that ethical philosophy should resemble medicine in its dedication to the practical goal of ameliorating human life. She goes on to explore how a medical and therapeutic conception of philosophy played itself out in the three principal Hellenistic schools of thought—the Epicurean, the Skeptic, and the Stoic.

All three schools worked to create a healing community that strove to counter the negative

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effects of competition. In the new community, the patient was led to recognize that his desires were unhealthy, infected by the pursuit of harmful goals. He was guided toward a state of release from every kind of attachment and from domination by the common emotions—anger, worry, love, and the fear of death. The passions, the emotions, had to go—or at least be strongly tempered. With imperturbability would come *eudaimonia*, or “human flourishing.”

For all her admiration of this argument, Nussbaum cannot help wondering about the price one pays for denying emotion. Does extirpation of the passions surrender some essential component of one’s humanity as well? Does freedom from pain and disturbance keep people from commitment to anything outside their own virtue? What is left to link a person to fellow human beings? In the end, Nussbaum cannot accept the arguments for radical emotional surgery or envisage a community that is both self-respecting and entirely free from anger. Emotion and morality are as inseparable from each other as emotion and rationality.

The men who founded the three great schools were prolific writers, but very little of their work survives. We are greatly dependent for our knowledge of their doctrines on later sources, particularly the Roman writers Cicero, Lucretius, and Seneca. The incompleteness of the evidence can make argument tricky, particularly when poetry—Senecan drama or Lucretian epic—must provide the philosophical argument. Though Nussbaum is an ingenious reader, her conclusions sometimes seem willed as much as argued. Moreover, she may be too determined to put a contemporary face on the Hellenistic philosophies and to weight them too heavily with meaning for the late 20th century.

Yet in the cause of an enlightened dispassion, Nussbaum writes with an abiding passion, which her ancestor philosophers would have forgiven in spite of themselves. More important, she restores philosophy to its ministering function (long since assumed by religion). In these fervent pages, it is once again the mind’s balm, the heart’s release.

## Arts & Letters

**THE ART OF THE PERSONAL ESSAY.** Ed. by Phillip Lopate. Anchor. 777 pp. \$30

There is no subject too quotidian or too delicate for the personal essayist. It may be a moth dying on Virginia Woolf’s window sill, or Seneca’s asthma, or Walter Benjamin’s experience of smoking hashish. “At the core of the personal essay,” explains Lopate in a spirited introduction to his anthology, “is the supposition that there is a certain unity to human experience.”

The personal essay’s fundamental departure from the more traditional formal essay is its familiarity. The author aims to connect intimately with the reader. When Montaigne (1533–92) ruminates about a severely deformed child, he is imploring the reader to join him in his personal confrontation with revulsion and prejudice. Beyond this unique qualification, the form of the personal essay is as fluid as its subject matter. Lu Hsun, one of the most famous modern Chinese writers (1881–1936), often slips into stream of consciousness reveries in a discussion of recovery from illness that ranges from elephants to blossoms and fruit. Samuel Johnson (1709–84) describes the boarders who have occupied his room chronologically and methodically: “The first tenant was a tailor. . . . The next was a young woman. . . . An elderly man of grave aspect, read the bill, and bargained for the room. . . . A short meagre man in a tarnish’d waistcoat, desired to see the garret. . . . At last [the landlady] took in two sisters. . . . Such, Mr. Rambler, are the changes which have happened in the narrow space where my present fortune has fixed my residence.”

Yet no matter the form, the goal is always to peel away artifice and reveal human complexity. Says Lopate, “The plot of a personal essay . . . consists in watching how far the essayist can drop past his or her psychic defenses toward deeper levels of honesty.” The essayist reflects a moment, showing us “how the world comes at another person, the irritations, jubiliations, aches and pains, humorous flashes.” In the end, the essayist dissolves, leaving readers alone to reconcile the reflection with their own reality. “The trick [for the personal essayist] is to realize

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that one is not important, except insofar as one's example can serve to elucidate a more widespread human trait and make readers feel a little less lonely and freakish."

**CAMP GROUNDS: Style and Homosexuality.** Ed. by David Bergman. Univ. of Mass. 312 pp. \$45

"To talk about camp is to betray it," wrote Susan Sontag in 1964. Sontag then proceeded to betray it at length, defining camp as "a certain sort of aestheticism" that elevates objects "not in terms of Beauty, but in terms of degree of artifice, of stylization." Camp offers a chance to be serious about the frivolous (e.g., Tiffany lamps) and frivolous about the serious ("Swan Lake"). Even though "homosexuals . . . constitute the vanguard—and the most articulate audience—of Camp," Sontag wrote, "Camp taste is much more than homosexual taste." As a purely aesthetic phenomenon, camp remains "disengaged, depoliticized, or at least, apolitical."

For nearly 30 years, academics considered Sontag's "Notes on Camp" the last word on the subject. But in today's world of cultural studies, gay studies, and women's studies, new interpretations of camp are emerging. Bergman, a professor of English at Towson State University, and most of the essayists he includes in *Camp Grounds*, believe Sontag failed to fully grasp the essential connection between camp and "homosexual culture." Far more than simply a type of aestheticism, camp has a subversive, or even emancipatory, potential: It represents a form of protest against conventional gender roles. Camp works by "drawing attention to the artifice of the gender system through exaggeration, parody, and juxtaposition," writes Bergman.

While the most obvious example of the politically subversive potential of camp remains the drag queen and his/her exaggerated feminine mannerisms, the essays here bring up far more ambiguous instances. Jack Babuscio invokes camp to explain why many gay moviegoers identify not with char-

acters *in* a movie but with the personal lives of the stars themselves: Gays and those who "camp" understand how nebulous are the apparently sharp boundaries between play-acting and "acting normal." Pamela Robertson, writing about Mae West, argues that "camp enabled [her fans] to view women's everyday roles as female impersonation."

*Camp Grounds* is a valuable corrective to the blinkered aestheticism that Sontag's essay encouraged. Not only has camp been a useful political tool for homosexuals, but, as Bergman notes, our culture's "natural" and normative heterosexuality has always been one of camp's central targets. Unfortunately, Bergman and many of his contributing essayists often press their claims too far, ascribing to camp a political simplemindedness that looks suspiciously like the moral (or moralistic) platform of a trendy academic of the '90s. Camp can make a political statement, but it is not merely a political statement. If camp serves as a reminder to the complacent that all chosen roles are, to some degree, theatrical, the lesson should apply as much to the role of serious academic as to any other.

**THE OLD MODERNS: Essays on Literature and Theory.** By Denis Donoghue. Knopf. 303 pp. \$27.50

To many contemporary literary critics, the modernist tradition, with its emphasis on subjectivity and the internalization of images and events, is not only elitist and reactionary but dead, replaced by the more open, accessible, and democratic playfulness of postmodernism. Donoghue, who teaches English and American literature at New York University, begs to differ. The "interiority" of modernist writers, he argues, is an authentic and enduring realm of imaginative freedom: "Thinking, feeling, reverie: the pleasures of these are self-evident, they don't have to be judged upon their results or upon their consequence as action in the world."

In *The Old Moderns*, which contains 17 elegant essays, some previously published, Donoghue defends literary subjectivity on another front as well. Today's critics impose upon literature their own political or philosophical beliefs, often purposefully stifling the voice of the author. In fact, literary theory has hardened into such dogma that there's not much one can do with it except force



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"it upon your poems as if they could have no other desire than to receive such overbearing attention." Donoghue argues that literature should be read as literature—that is, with disinterested aesthetic appreciation, "as practices of experience to be imagined." These practices are related to such areas as religion, politics, and economics, but they should not be confused with them.

Donoghue's own critical restraint begins with his definition of modernism. For the sake of argument he settles upon one particular meaning, but acknowledges that "a different account of it would be just as feasible." Donoghue links the rise of literary modernism to the growth of cities in the 19th century, specifically to the situation of individuals who found their individuality threatened by mass society and the crowd. In response, the modernist mind turned inward, to ponder the validity of its feelings. Modernism was thus the result of writers perceiving "their development as an inner drama, rather than as a willing engagement with the contents of the objective culture."

Donoghue continues to demonstrate his notion of restraint in his close but never overbearing reading of works by such modernist heroes as Henry James, Wallace Stevens, W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot. In essays refreshingly free of literary jargon, Donoghue succeeds at making the literature more important than the criticism.

Ironically, Donoghue notes, theorists who judge literature by its political relevance undermine the power of art to affect the world: "The supreme merit of art is that it contradicts the version of reality that obtains in social and economic life." Moreover, "introspection is not the puny, self-regarding act it is commonly said to be but an act of ethical and moral bearing by which the mind, in privacy, imagines lives other than its own. The chief justification for reading literature is that it trains the reader in the exercise of that imagination."

**THE KING OF INVENTORS: A Life of Wilkie Collins.** By Catherine Peters. Princeton Univ. Press. 502 pp. \$29.95

No one unnerves quite like Wilkie Collins. This writer of thrillers and mysteries was to the Victorian age what Stephen King and Ellery Queen are to ours. Even today his novels remind one of the

power of words to immobilize and terrify. Collins (1824–89) invented the "novel of sensation," and his acknowledged masterwork, the hugely popular *Woman in White* (1860), has yet to be bettered. The "'creepy' effect, as of pounded ice dropped down the neck," as his contemporary Edmund Yates put it, comes not only from an ability to spring unearthly images on the reader ("the figure of a solitary Woman, dressed from head to foot in white garments"), but from the way these phantasms crop up in the most everyday of locations. Collins is also known for his precise catalogue of the byzantine moral and sexual codes of his era. As Peters's detailed biography suggests, Collins acquired at least some of his expertise from his own spectacularly polygamous life. He spent most of his adult years with two women, Martha Rudd and Caroline Graves, marrying neither and having children by both.

"Keeping" mistresses was hardly novel, of course, and having a double life never got the average Victorian gentleman barred from any club. But Collins's doubling was different. He never undertook to conceal the staid bohemianism of his common-law marriages. And while Rudd and Graves made little headway in the public world, and the taint of bastardy certainly handicapped his children's rise to respectability in later life, Collins was able to circulate freely among the cream as well as the dregs of London's society.

Unfortunately, Peters is reluctant to make any explicit connections between Collins's life and work. She never asks how an author whose best work depended on titillation, terror, and transgression managed to create for himself a space of unparalleled domestic tranquillity (in fact, two such spaces) outside social boundaries. But Peters does explain why Collins's writing took a nose dive after 1868. A mere 45, he was apparently at the peak of his powers, having produced since 1860 not just his two most famous novels (*The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*) but also such gems as *No Name* and *Armadale*. Most likely, his best work was done during the decade he spent being tutored by and collaborating with Charles Dickens. After his mentor's death in 1870, Collins yielded completely to his penchant for pedantic explanation. Worse, he seems to have forgotten how to combine social analysis with spine-tingling *frisson*.

Collins concluded an 1888 magazine article with

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a sort of guilty pride that he would be remembered principally as the author of "the stuff that raised the famous Blush . . . on the soft round object, sacred to British claptrap—the cheek of a young person." The self-tribute is fitting. In blushes—and in shivers—the body registers the mind's shame, disturbance, or arousal. Perhaps Collins's greatest genius was to determine how to produce such reactions in his readers while avoiding them in his own life.

## History

**THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY: An Intellectual History.** By Forrest McDonald. *Univ. of Kansas.* 516 pp. \$29.95

Having experienced the tyranny of the British king, the Founding Fathers—like most Americans—were ambivalent toward, even fearful of, executive power. But after enduring the absence of a strong executive during the Articles of Confederation, they recognized the need for it. That left them with a problem McDonald calls the "central dilemma of constitutional government." The safety and well-being of the nation, writes McDonald, require a quasi-monarchical figure who can "operate outside or above the law." In his 15th book, McDonald, a professor of intellectual history at the University of Alabama and a leading authority on the Constitution, describes how the Framers avoided their worst fears and still managed to build an office that "has been responsible for less harm and more good, in the nation and in the world, than perhaps any other secular institution in history."

McDonald explains that he undertook this study partially because of the "striking reversal of ideological positions concerning the presidency that has taken place in recent decades." Until the 1960s, liberals generally supported increasing the authority of the executive at the expense of Congress and the Supreme Court, while conservatives stood for congressional sovereignty and local government. During the Vietnam War, the pattern began to reverse itself, with conservatives coming to champion greater power for the executive branch. The result has been a presidency with authority far exceeding the conception set forth by the authors of the Constitution. McDonald sets out to explore "whether the enormous growth of the responsibili-

ties vested in the American Presidency has been necessary, practical or desirable."

McDonald begins his study with a lengthy look at the presidency's theoretical underpinnings in English constitutional law, the writings of various philosophers popular in the 18th century, and the colonial experience itself. He then moves into a discussion of the Constitutional Convention, at which the Founders had trouble coming up with a name for the office. For a time, delegates referred merely to "the Executive." They flirted with John Adams's suggestion of "governor of the united People and States of America," but abandoned it because it smacked of colonial proprietorship. "President," however, was different. The word had been used by informal associations throughout the 13 colonies, and its Latin root gave it the reassuring connotation of "passivity."

No matter what the name, every American knew that George Washington would fill the office. "It is no exaggeration to say that Americans were willing to venture the experiment with a single, national republican chief executive only because of their unreserved trust" in him, says McDonald. Washington at first shied away from the role—he had promised never again to hold public office after resigning command of the Continental Army—but an aggressive letter-writing campaign led by Alexander Hamilton eventually swayed him. The authority of the office rapidly expanded with the election of successive presidents, most notably (and ironically) that of Thomas Jefferson in 1800. But not until the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 did presidential contenders campaign actively and solicit votes openly—marking the beginning of the modern presidency.

McDonald concludes by examining the president's relationship to such areas as legislation, foreign affairs, and image making. Here he becomes less the scholar and more the polemicist. We learn that he dislikes Franklin Roosevelt, believes Richard Nixon will come to be reckoned among the "great" or "near-great" presidents, and admires Ronald Reagan without reservation, crediting him for having won the Cold War almost single-handedly.

All in all, though, this remains a balanced inspection of America's most closely scrutinized political institution. "Though the powers of the office have sometimes been grossly abused,"

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McDonald observes, "though the presidency has become almost impossible to manage, and though the caliber of the people who serve as chief executive has declined erratically but persistently from the day George Washington left office," the presidency continues "unparalleled in its stability" as a "model of order and sanity." Americans have elevated 41 different people to the White House, and in the process let control of the executive office go from one party to another 21 times, but only once, in 1861, has the nation come apart. Peaceful transfers are the norm, and the office remains, remarkably, "fundamentally true to the original design."

**THE SOVIET TRAGEDY: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991.** By Martin Malia. Free Press. 575 pp. \$24.95

**IMPERIUM.** By Ryszard Kapuscinski. Knopf. 331 pp. \$24

The collapse of the Soviet Union has drawn Sovietologists into one of history's great whodunits: Did the Soviet Union kill communism, or did communism kill the Soviet Union? To Malia, a former professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, communism is clearly the culprit. His argument here expands and updates his widely discussed 1990 article, "To the Stalin Mausoleum," published in *Daedalus* under the pseudonym "Z." He charges that those who believe that Stalin's crimes were an aberration of Leninist thought, or that Soviet communism could be successfully reformed, get things exactly wrong.

In Malia's view, Western Sovietologists failed to foresee communism's inevitable demise because they ignored the study of ideology for the more neutral and "scientific" study of social and economic forces. They refused to recognize that the Bolsheviks imposed Marxism on Russia in a utopian "revolution from above" that necessitated thorough and relentless destruction of the existing social and economic order. Every time Lenin, Khrushchev, and, finally, Gorbachev were forced by economic exigencies to adopt market-based "reforms," they amplified the contradictions between communist theory and reality. "If in the end communism collapsed like a house of cards," writes Malia, "it was because it had always been a house of cards."

Malia's complaint about the myopia of most Sovietologists is shared by Kapuscinski, the peripatetic Polish journalist whose previous books include quirky reports on politics in Ethiopia during the last years of Emperor Haile Selassie and in Iran under Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. Kapuscinski would also agree with Malia that communism killed the Soviet Union. But Kapuscinski sees a far greater connection between the fear and fatalism of "Homo Sovieticus" and that of his Russian forebears. Comparing the eras of Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev with those of Peter I, Catherine II, and Alexander III, Kapuscinski asks: "In what other country does the person of the ruler, his character traits, his manias and phobias, leave such a profound stamp on the national history, its course, its ascents and downfalls?"

Kapuscinski, however, is more intent on offering an impressionistic tour of the Soviet "imperium" than on arguing about its theoretical origins. This he does through vividly evoked encounters with intellectuals in Moscow, coal miners above the Arctic Circle, and ex-fishermen near the shrinking Aral Sea. Some readers may find his meditations on the making of cognac in Tbilisi irrelevant. But more often than not his offbeat observations cast new light on the curious dystopia that was the Soviet Union. Commenting on the miles of barbed wire he saw in his travels, Kapuscinski notes: "If one were to multiply all this by the number of years the Soviet government had been in existence, it would be easy to see why, in the shops of Smolensk or Omsk, one can buy neither a hoe nor a hammer, to say nothing of a knife or a spoon."

At journey's end, Kapuscinski describes the impact of new freedoms on the former Soviet Union but concludes that "the so-called Soviet man is first and foremost an utterly exhausted man. . . . We shouldn't be surprised if he doesn't have the strength to rejoice in his newly won freedom." Malia agrees. After "70 years on the road to nowhere," he writes, a Russia rendered prostrate by the total collapse of its "total system" must simultaneously create a liberal economic order, a democratic polity, and a viable nation-state.

One may take issue with Malia's tidy intellectualism, which gives short shrift to the role of individual error, pettiness, vainglory, and other human traits in the rise and fall of communism. But by demonstrating the animating power of

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“maximalist” socialist ideology and its ultimately fatal consequences, Malia has not only recast the historiography of the Soviet Union, but posed a powerful intellectual challenge to any attempts to revive socialism as the solution to inequity.

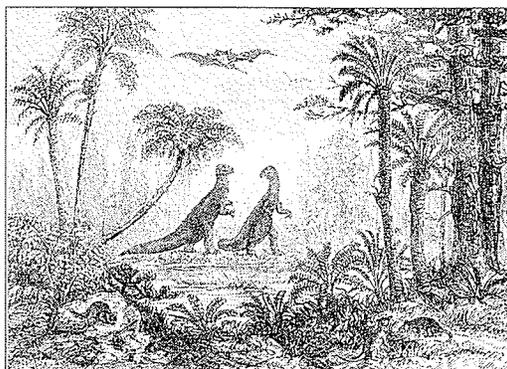
## Science & Technology

**THE MASS-EXTINCTION DEBATES:** How Science Works in a Crisis. *Ed. by William Glen.* Stanford Univ. Press. 370 pp. \$49.50

Why did dinosaurs and many other large lifeforms suddenly vanish from the earth 65 million years ago? For decades, the mystery bedeviled paleontologists studying the fossil record. In 1980, however, geologist Walter Alvarez, his father Luiz (a Nobelist in physics), and a team of University of California scientists published a radical hypothesis to explain unusual concentrations of rare iridium they found in clay beds dating from the period of the dinosaur extinctions. Their proposal: A meteor, 10 kilometers across and rich in iridium, had struck the earth, filling the skies with dust that chilled the planet and doomed the dinosaurs.

As the first testable hypothesis on the subject, the impact theory should have been allowed a respectable day in the scientific marketplace. Instead, says Glen, a visiting scientist and historian at the United States Geological Survey, too many scientists rejected it out of hand. Volcanists dismissed it because it competed with their own theory—that an unprecedented level of volcanic activity was responsible for the iridium dust, having spewed it up from the earth’s core. Other scientists rejected it simply because non-paleontologists had proposed it. And doubters threw up a host of obstacles, demanding that the impact camp provide impossible kinds of proof—measurements beyond the capabilities of existing scientific instruments, for instance—and challenging them to locate the impact site.

Eventually, after a publishing boomlet produced more than 2,500 papers and books on the impact theory, scientists ended up accepting or rejecting it based on their respective loyalties. Indeed, the pace of the new discoveries, theories, and countertheories was such that, as Glen remarks,



“only few [scientists] could keep abreast.” Many ended up relying on what they read in popular magazines and scientific journals, which, according to Glen, often printed “poorly informed and biased commentary.”

Another contributor to this volume, paleontologist Digby McLaren, points out that the reception of the impact theory followed the same pattern as that given other initially controversial theories—Charles Darwin’s 1859 theory of evolution, for instance, and Alfred Wegener’s 1912 theory of continental drift. Most scientists rejected those theories outright, and it was only after considerable experimentation and study that they were reluctantly accepted. Similarly, the impact theory is now finally receiving more open-minded consideration. Indeed, most scientists today agree that one large object—and possibly more—striking the earth either triggered the dinosaur extinctions or contributed greatly to them.

Of course, scientists should be skeptical of new theories, and should insist that they be bolstered by accurate evidence, particularly when they represent radical breaks with tradition. But challenging ideas deserve to be tested in the laboratory or the field—not in conferences and the media under a cloud of hostility and doubt. As Glen concludes during a conversation with paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, the scientific community ought to be “a guarantor of objectivity,” and yet time and again scientists greet new theories by imposing “subjectivities, and their power to do so seems to fly in the face of their philosophic purpose and stated goals.”

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# POETRY

E V G E N Y R E I N

*Selected and Introduced by Joseph Brodsky*

A quarter century ago, during a chance kitchen-table conversation in what used to be called Leningrad, someone—perhaps it was even me—christened Evgeny Rein an “elegiac urbanist.” This characterization now strikes me as rather inadequate, perhaps because it was more a quick sketch of the poet’s personality than a definition that actually corresponded to the metaphorical radius or the metaphysical vector of his work.

Nevertheless, by genre and by the dominant tone of most of his verse, Rein is unquestionably an elegiac poet. His main theme is the end of things, the end, to put it more broadly, of a world order that is dear—or at least acceptable—to him. The incarnation of this order in his poetry is the city in which he grew up, the city of Leningrad. It is the heroine of the love lyrics he wrote in the 1960s and ’70s. It is the circle of friends from the same period, which formed, in the expression of the renowned Russian poetess Anna Akhmatova, a “magical chorus” and which lost its cupola when she died in 1966.

But in contrast to the dramatic effect accompanying the collapse of a world or a myth usually found in elegiac poets, in contrast to Eliot’s “This is the way the world ends” (“This is the way the world ends/ Not with a bang but a whimper”), the death of the world order in Rein is accompanied by a vulgar ditty from the ’30s or ’40s. Indeed, for Rein’s work—and in my view he is metrically the most gifted Russian poet of the second half of the 20th century—the cadences of Soviet popular music from that era probably had a greater influence than the technical achievements of the best among the Russian futurists and constructivists.

Moreover, the death of the world order for Rein is not a singular event but a gradual process. Rein is a poet of erosion, of disintegration—of human relationships, moral categories, historical connections, and dependencies of any nature binomial or multipolar. And his verse, like a spinning black record, is the only form of mutation accessible to him, a fact testified to above all by his assonant rhymes. To top it all, this poet is extraordinarily concrete, substantive. Eighty percent of a Rein poem commonly consists of nouns and proper names. The remaining 20 percent is verbs, adverbs, and, least, adjectives. As a result, the reader often has the impression that the subject of the elegy is language itself, parts of speech illuminated by the sunset of the past tense, which casts its long shadow into the present and even touches the future.

But what might seem to the reader a conscious artifice, or at the very least a product of retrospection, is not. For the surplus materiality, the oversaturation with nouns, was present in Rein’s poetry from the beginning. In his earliest poems, at the end of the 1950s—in particular in his first poem, “Arthur Rimbaud”—one notes a kind of “Adamism,” a tendency to name things, to

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enumerate the objects of this world, an almost infantlike thirst for words. For this poet, the discovery of the world accompanied the development of diction. Ahead of him there was, if not life, then at least a huge dictionary.

Rein not only radically extended the poetic vocabulary and sound palette of Russian poetry; he also broadened and shook up the psychological sweep of Russian lyrics. He is an elegist, but of a tragic stripe. Few among his compatriots would dispute the depth of the despair and exhaustion that darkens these poems. Throughout a quarter of a century Rein's lyrical hero, that "restless inhabitant of two capitals" who is "his own commander," has accomplished a rather horrifying evolution, resulting in his appeal to the Creator: "Either return my soul,/ or appoint it to no one." And then—since we're talking about evolution—the hero dwindles further to "I am a gray, boulevard bird." The singing of this boulevard bird is truly heartbreaking, not so much for its timbre as for the fact that in it one hears not complaint but utter indifference to its own twitter.

At present Rein has published three collections of poems; the first of them appeared when he was 50 years old, in 1988. The publication of the two following books, at intervals of about two years, should apparently be seen as the triumph of justice. The problem with triumphs of justice is that by definition they always come late: in this case 25 years late. And even these three collections do not adequately convey the scope and significance of this poet for Russian literature.

Every important poet has his or her own beloved, idiosyncratic landscape. Rein has two. One is a city view disappearing into aniline, most likely Kamenostrovsky Prospect in Leningrad, with its fin de siècle vinaigrette of art nouveau flavored with Muscovite constructivism, with the obligatory bridge and wrinkled sheet of leaden water. The other is a blend of the Baltics and the Black Sea, "a gulf with the Kronstadt at its side,/ with the maneuvers of silent navies," with palms, balustrades, a passenger boat entering the bay, new battleships broadcasting the foxtrot as they sail in formation, people strolling on the promenade. If the first represents a lost, or at least strongly compromised, paradise, the second is a possible, acquired paradise.

I would like, above all, to sit Evgeny Rein down at a table on some veranda of this paradise, place a pen and piece of paper before him, and leave him for a time—the longer the better—in peace. For inspiration, I would give him Virgil—better the *Bucolics* or *Georgics* than the *Aeneid*, and even better, a volume of Propertius. Something, in other words, devoid of ambitions and created without apparent haste. After a month or so I'd drop in to see what had happened. Russian poetry has never had enough time (or space, for that matter). This explains its intensity and wrenching quality—not to say hysteria. What has been created in the existent parameters over the last hundred years—under Damocles' sword—is extraordinary, but too often colored by a sense of "now or never!"

The deformation of poetic fate is as much the norm for us as its truncation, and the poet—even a beginning poet—sees himself and is received by his audience in a dramatic key. What is expected of him is not restraint but falsetto, not wisdom but irony or, in the best case, sincerity. This is not much, and one

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wants to hope that this state of affairs will change—and that the change will begin immediately, with Rein. That's why one wants to give him Virgil or Propertius. He has already been Ovid, and Catullus as well. After all, a man living in an empire, especially a collapsing one, loses little when he identifies himself with those who in similar circumstances, 2,000 years ago, did not allow themselves to fall into dependence on surrounding events, and whose speech remained firm. It must be said that during the era of imperial petrification Rein has done as much.

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### Vologda

In an unfamiliar, provincial town,  
while sitting for a smoke above the river,  
prick up your ears and take a look around  
—you'll be repaid for all your grief twice over.

There you'll catch voices, automobile  
horns, barking dogs, and scraps of dance-band music.  
Don't die: the heavens are attainable  
without that happening. And you're lucid.

### Onto the Road

As though a weather vane, your angel gyred  
a wing full-face, askance—you did not linger  
within that room; as though a coal that's fired,  
your own concerns now scintillate and clinker.  
You pour the tea, a sweet and muddled brew  
with caramel and a wine that you concocted.  
A month of Sundays since we met—adieu,  
this aging hangover cannot be doctored;  
half-practicable dreams, attempts that missed—  
the only chance whose countenance was special.  
Whatever your occasion for our tryst—  
we split, as divorcés upon the threshold.  
Inside the shared apartment, there's no sound,  
a drafty postern at the manor kitchen.  
Existence has already been unwound,  
spoiled rotten by the cryptographic pidgin  
of millions from Asia, tops that spun  
by clockwork as the earth itself would pivot.  
To flee their onslaught, where would you have run,  
in which translation is their truth delivered?  
A ringing comes from deep within time's pail,

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the tropic zones have long since matched the tundras.  
To die before Attila's Sten gun hail  
in flight with Alexander would be wondrous.  
The time has come, we brim with lack of sound  
that's leveled by the eye of some colossus.  
And these transitions? Purely outward-bound,  
the track a footfall nevermore recrosses.

### On Fontanka

On Fontanka there's ruin and ravage,  
And the building on Troitsky Street's razed,  
Crawling out of a hatch comes some savage—  
He's unshaven and bare to the waist.  
On his chest azure lines interblended—  
Hammer, sickle, an eagle's two heads,  
Years of hooch left his eyebags distended,  
'Round his brow a gold halo was spread.  
The cathedral's his goal this close evening.  
And he spits on the worn-away bronze  
Then he sings hateful songs on perceiving  
He is close to the place he belongs.  
There is major renewal and ravage,  
All the prewar years' nonsense and trash,  
G.P.U.\*, agitprop, people scavenged—  
All placed under the bricks that lay smashed.  
Then my people took up their existence  
On the ruins, as dust they'd alight—  
So a squadron flies into the distance  
Before dawn in the blood of the fight.  
So then come crashing down, multistoried  
House of arrogance, theft, all that's false,  
Because fearless and dank on your flooring,  
The Neva's gray of eventide crawls.  
Go back home, bird of passage and urchin,  
To where cisterns decay, beneath gates.  
On this night you're well known to what's urgent—  
To stoutheartedness and to the fates.  
Where the building on Troitsky is ruined,  
Pitch-dark standards both flutter and swell,  
At the bottom of gates, winds are strewing  
Paper sheets, your next book of black spells.

\*G.P.U.—State Political Directorate. Secret police force that replaced the Cheka in 1922.

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## The Music of Life

*Resplendency and gloom—a cleft domain  
and equally we strive to read the twain.  
When from a tree an apple has descended,  
a man has seized the firmament's design!  
The prophet's savage import is extended  
uncommonly to us in such a sign.*  
—E. A. Baratynsky (1800–1844)

Music of life—petroleum waters,  
rollers at Yalta, stacked high on the shoreline.  
Music of life—another man's quarters. . .  
Give me your promise then, tell me for sure I'm

not to be left here, alone at my mooring,  
lips weighted down with a word that's conclusive.  
Over my shoulders may cables keep calling—  
imports are taken, you'll not be exclusive.

Trumpets and flutes sound above the dark reason  
of the Black Sea and the fall of the curtain—  
clearly, the time to begin has arisen  
for these last twenty-four hours, fraught with hurting.

White beams from searchlights illumine expressions;  
those who will die today under the water,  
music of life, every bird knows your essence,  
you're unsubdued in the midnight of Yalta.

Ladders are falling and snifters in shatters,  
from "Oreanda" come timbres of tangos,  
music of life, give me air apparatus,  
oxygen tanks, hold me firm in your tangles.

What's the "Titanic" to us or "Nakhimov"?  
Once we have jettisoned both life preservers,  
heading for shallows, together we'll swim off,  
someone's en route, and we'll come to his service.

Filling his mouth with a stream of pure liquor,  
flooding his soul with "The Slav Maiden's Parting,"  
music of life—the offended, the victor,  
make me forget at the funeral party.

Beethoven's heard as he rolls me a hogshead,  
Scriabin is uptown and pounding the keyboard,

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out floats a life raft, constructed of logs and  
old-fashioned organs, destroyed on the seaboard.

Time and again you'll be mourning your liners,  
under full orchestras, mainsails come crashing,  
now, as then, send me your song through malignest  
seawaters, just as before, come with passion.

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The nighttime abettor of ruin  
Spears falsehood and truth in the black,  
Akin to a hunting knife, hewing  
A path through a stationary pack.

Exhausted by secretive essays,  
With wing tips obliquely upraised,  
You fall towards towns of excesses  
By way of their ordurous blaze.

Correctives exist for your purges,  
Regardless of flight having passed.  
You're fifty percent female virtues—  
And this is your soul's saving cast.

Reclining across the chance bedstead,  
There's movement within your eye's green,  
And now, who is truly suggested,  
A mermaid or infant? Machine?

I would have become your own peon,  
Beforehand, whenever I'd known  
I'll die in your red empyrean,  
Resembling the first to have flown.

You'll always escape being pinioned,  
You have to be cherished at least  
Till vanishing in your dominion  
Of night-clouds, an impious beast.

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"Vologda" was translated by Paul Graves. All other  
poems were translated by David MacFadyen.

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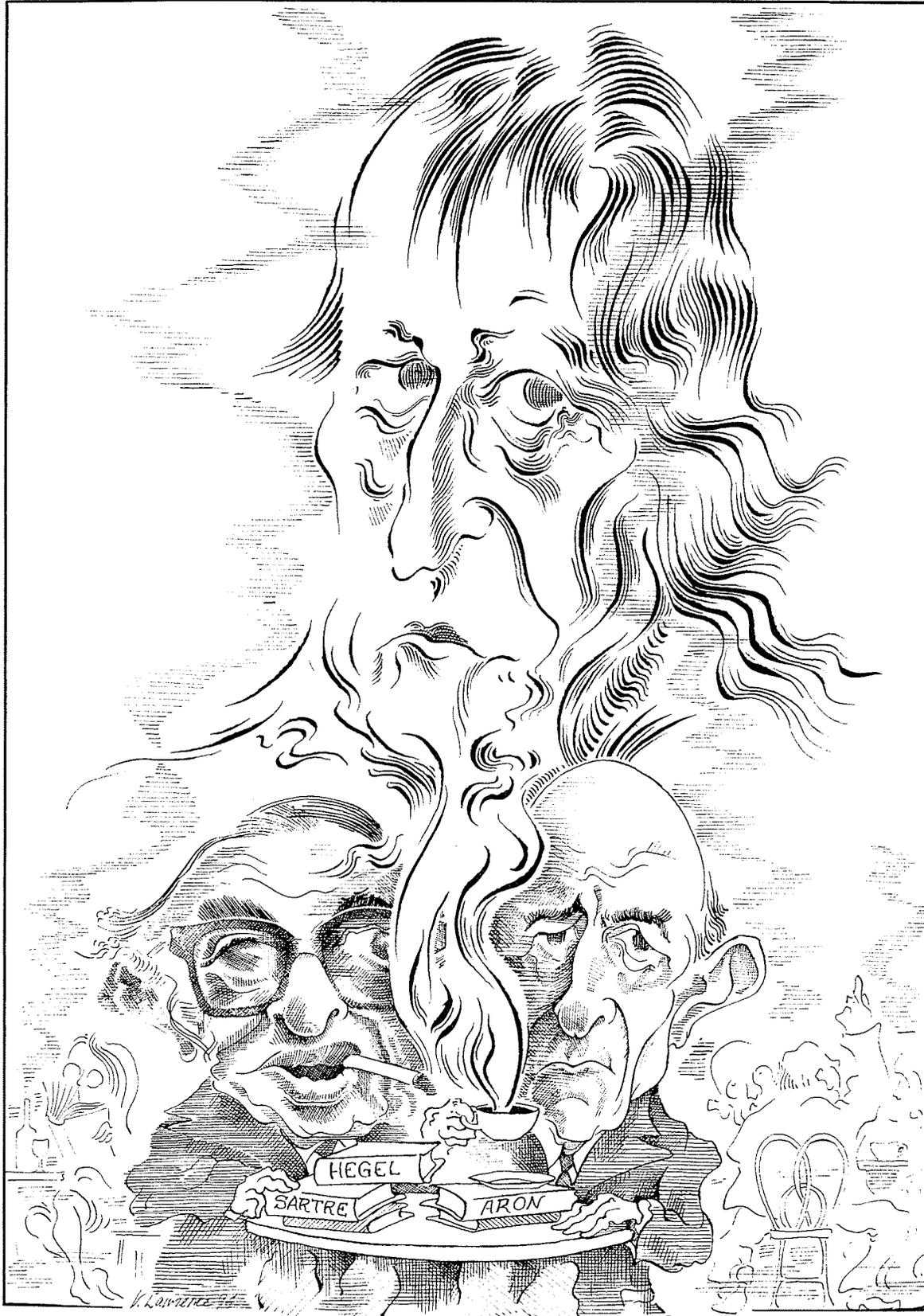
# THE STRANGE BIRTH *of* LIBERAL FRANCE

*The rise of a truly liberal political order was one of the glories of France's "trentes glorieuses," as the first 30 years after World War II came to be called. Yet only in more recent decades has a new generation of French thinkers begun to challenge the reign of such decidedly antiliberal intellectual giants as Sartre, Foucault, and Derrida. Herewith the history of a belated revolution.*

BY MARK LILLA

**F**or much of this century, a chasm has separated political philosophy in the English-speaking world from that of continental Europe. As is well known, this rift did not open overnight. Its origins can be traced back to the early 19th century, when distinctly national styles of philosophical reflection first arose in Europe in the wake of the French Revolution. As late as the 17th century, European thinkers shared a common language, Latin, which allowed them to communicate directly with their contemporaries and indirectly with thinkers of the Middle Ages and antiquity. By the 18th century, Latin began to fall out of use, but the outlook of the Enlightenment was shared widely enough to permit the works of the *Lumières* to be appreciated across the whole of Europe. Kant read Hume, Hume read Holbach, and everyone read Rousseau.

But after the Revolution this extensive community of mind disintegrated, and in its place there developed a number of independent circles defined more strictly by language and approach. The German philosophies of Schelling and Hegel, for example, could not be plausibly translated into the English vocabulary of Bentham and Mill. The two heterogeneous constellations we now call "Continental" and "Anglo-American" philosophy—the one growing out of German idealism, the other out of British empiricism and skepticism—owe their births to this 19th-cen-



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tury development, which might be called “philosophical nationalism.”

The estrangement of *political* philosophy in the two traditions had more concrete causes, however. They were, not surprisingly, political. Here, too, we must turn back to the 19th century to understand how they came about. It is a historical commonplace that modern Anglo-American political thought remains within the narrow orbit of liberalism. This certainly is the view of Continental observers ever since Tocqueville, who have long expressed astonishment, whether admiring or critical, at the supposedly incorrigible liberal temper of the British and Americans. Over the past two centuries, liberal ideas and liberal government have survived the age of revolution, the age of industrialization, and the age of total war.

**T**o those of us living in these liberal nations, our histories look far less harmonious. We think readily of our radical dissenters and our conservatives. Nonetheless, even our most radical and conservative thinkers have seldom strayed far from the fundamental principles of liberal politics: limited government, the rule of law, multiparty elections, an independent judiciary and civil service, civilian control of the military, individual rights to free association and worship, private property, and so forth. Our fiercest political disputes—whether over suffrage in England or over slavery and civil rights in America—have been over the application of these principles and the structure of these institutions, rarely over their legitimacy. However great the variety and contention we find within the history of our political thought, the fact remains that coherent antiliberal traditions never developed within it.

On the Continent they did. Indeed, the history of Continental political thought since the French Revolution is largely the history of

different national species of illiberalism opposed to the fundamental principles listed above, albeit for different reasons. They were all born shortly after the Revolution itself, which had left Continental thinkers bitterly divided over its legacy. In every country there could be found a counter-revolutionary party defending church and crown and hoping to restore their authority; opposing them was an equally determined party desiring more radical forms of democracy or socialism to accomplish what the French Revolution had already begun. As time passed, the two parties shared little apart from their hostility to liberalism, but this was enough to marginalize it throughout the 19th century. Their common attitude also led to the distortion of the original liberal idea, which came to be understood by proponents as a narrowly economic doctrine, or by opponents as a political doctrine meant to defend the economic interests of the rising middle classes. In 19th-century Europe, liberalism progressively became a partisan or party label rather than a term employed to describe a type of modern regime. It is true that by century's end, France, Italy, and Germany had managed to construct constitutional regimes that were “liberal” in a great many respects. But this was only accomplished by balancing illiberal political forces delicately against one another, not by making Europeans into liberals. What later would be called liberal “political culture” was absent, and few thinkers promoted it. And by the early years of World War II all these quasi-liberal governments had vanished.

**T**he divide within modern Western political thought was thus the effect of, and eventually contributed to, the differing political experiences of America, Britain, and continental Europe in the century and a half following the French Revolution. “Philosophical nationalism” did

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*Mark Lilla is assistant professor of politics and French studies at New York University. He is the author of G. B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern (1993) and editor of Princeton University Press's forthcoming New French Thought: Political Philosophy, from whose introduction this essay is adapted. Copyright © 1994 by Princeton University Press.*

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not arise in a vacuum. Yet one of the paradoxes of postwar intellectual life is that this "nationalism" persisted, even as the political conditions that originally nourished it began to disappear. In the 19th century, differences over political principle also reflected different political histories: Britain and America had unbroken experiences with liberalism; continental Europe had barely known it. But in the decades following World War II, France, West Germany, and Italy all became thriving liberal republics. This was not accomplished overnight, nor was success ever guaranteed. But the political history of postwar Europe now appears essentially to have been the history of its liberalization, a liberalization equally of institutions and of public habits and mores. Whatever challenges governments face in Western Europe today (and they are many), they are challenges that arise *within* European liberal polities, and many are to be found in the United States and Great Britain as well.

Nonetheless, political thought on the Continent remained thoroughly antiliberal in orientation after the war. Its right-wing version had been inescapably tainted by the fascist experience and disappeared almost immediately without a trace. But left-wing antiliberalism of a socialist or communist bent emerged strengthened from the war experience. In Germany the works of Marxists of the '30s—Georg Lukacs, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Ernst Bloch—were revived and later reanimated by younger thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas. In Italy the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci were published and became the key texts for understanding the relations between Italian politics and culture. And in France, Marxism became, in the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, the "unsurpassable horizon" of the age and remained so even as it was reinterpreted in light of existentialism, surrealism, structural linguistics, and even Freudian psychology. In short, while in practice continental Europe was beginning to share the Anglo-American experience with liberal democracy, in theory it still con-

sidered liberalism unworthy of sympathetic study.

For decades, then, a sort of Cold War in political philosophy played itself out. Continental thinkers studiously ignored the writings of American and English liberals, and the compliment was returned. Beginning in the mid-1960s, though, the contemporary writings of a number of these Continental figures were translated and began to be discussed in Anglo-American academic circles. While this development might have signaled a wider debate over the character of the liberal age, it seemed only to transfer this Cold War to America's domestic front. The differences proved deep between those who used the language of analytic philosophy to treat problems internal to liberalism and those who criticized contemporary liberal societies from a more historical standpoint using other vocabularies, whether those of Marxism, French structuralism, or German critical theory. Despite repeated professions of mutual respect and understanding, two independent ways of conceiving the tasks and methods of political philosophy have since grown up within the Anglo-American world.

The real casualties of this philosophical Cold War were the antagonists themselves, who gradually became as provincial as the thinkers of the age of high "philosophical nationalism." It is not that partisans of the liberal and Continental approaches in the United States and Britain have failed to address each other; they have, or at least have tried to. Rather, by addressing primarily each other, they both have lost touch with what is currently being thought, written, and experienced on the Continent. European intellectuals frequently express astonishment that a fixed canon of accepted "Continental" authors who became prominent nearly 25 years ago are still being quarreled over among Britons and Americans today. Whatever one makes of these works, it is clear to anyone familiar with contemporary Continental thought in the original languages that Europeans themselves have moved on to new questions and approaches.

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"Philosophical nationalism" is on the wane in Europe. Not only is Anglo-American thought being translated and read more seriously than ever before; Continental philosophers have also been rethinking their own traditions of political thought, whether those of the postwar era or those running back to the French Revolution. This has involved a critical look at the methods, language, and judgment of those traditions—and, in particular, at what Fritz Stern once called (in reference to Germany) the "failures of illiberalism." Though the works that exist in English translation give little sense of this, Continental political thought is very much in transition today. One has the impression that the Cold War in political philosophy has ceased to engage the best minds on the Continent, and it is now a strictly Anglo-American affair.

**N**owhere has the recent reassessment of the Continental tradition been more dramatic and fruitful than in France. To their admirers, French intellectuals have represented a model of critical thinking about politics for most of this century, and a welcome alternative to self-satisfied Anglo-American liberals. In the last decade or two, however, the French themselves have turned a critical eye toward this heritage, provoking a strong reaction against its most representative figures. Such a development could be seen as part of the natural generational flux of intellectual life in France, where patricide has a long, distinguished history. But in this case it also prompted serious reconsideration of a long-standing Continental illiberalism, of which postwar French philosophy is only one recent form. Young French thinkers today sense themselves to be living at the end of something—if not at the end of history, then certainly at the end of a history that has defined their national political consciousness for nearly two centuries. They have come to see modern French politics and political thought as one continuous struggle over the character of the society that the Revolution created, a society that has, over the past 50 years,

taken on a progressively more liberal cast.

As the French themselves now generally portray their intellectual and political history, their path to liberalism has not been direct; nor does it resemble the one followed by Britain or the United States. The French correctly point out that French liberalism as a doctrine grew up within the 18th-century Enlightenment critique of monarchical absolutism, which gave it a particular cast. While the works of Montesquieu were rather close in spirit to those of English and American liberals, the writings of Voltaire and the other philosophes were more exercises in criticism directed against established political and ecclesiastical power than developed theories of government. Disinterested, concrete reflection on political institutions was rare in France in the decades before the Revolution, and hardly more common thereafter.

Instead, as the historian François Furet has methodically demonstrated in his writings during the past two decades, French political debate in the 19th century soon devolved into a struggle over the revolutionary heritage that largely excluded the kind of liberal politics that developed in England and America. The Revolution was seen, much as it is again in France today, as a threshold separating the modern world from all that preceded it. To take sides on the Revolution meant taking sides on modernity itself, and this controversy over the modern age soon displaced strictly political debate over the aims and limits of modern government.

On this account, it is not surprising that in the history of 19th-century France, which is littered with republics, restorations, revolutions, and empires, the spirit of liberalism in the Anglo-American sense never really took hold. This is not to say that the French did not enjoy extensive liberties and periods of relative political stability during this era. Nor is it to say that France did not develop its own liberal tradition of thought. In the first half of the century there was a very important movement that included Benjamin Constant, Germaine de Staël, Alexis de Tocqueville, and François

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Guizot, who are all much studied today. What distinguished these liberals from their royalist and radical adversaries was that they criticized the means of the Revolution, in particular the Terror, but resigned themselves to living in the society it had created. One reason they are so widely appreciated now is that they anticipated the current French preoccupation with the Revolution as the threshold of the modern age. For the 19th-century liberals, as for their present students, the Revolution had given birth to a new form of society, perhaps even a new human type, that could no longer be understood in the categories of the ancien régime but required strictly modern ones. Whether they used the terms "modern liberty" (Constant) or "democracy" and "equality of condition" (Tocqueville) to describe that society, they believed that liberalism as a form of government was more adapted to its dynamics than a restored absolutism or, later, socialism. At the time, however, their works appeared mainly critical and oppositional, reacting to events of the day: the collapse of the Revolution into the Terror, the rise of Napoleonic despotism and empire, and the threat of social upheaval in 1848. They were without wide intellectual influence after their time.

**B**y the middle of the 19th century, this intellectually important though ultimately impotent school of liberalism had given way to a distinctively French doctrine called "republicanism." *Républicain* is the least precise and most widely invoked concept in the French political lexicon. Even today, after the waning of Marxism, there are hardly any politicians or intellectuals who do not claim it as their own. The term harks back to the rhetoric of the Revolution, which was deeply imbued with references to classical (especially Roman) republicanism. After the Terror it became common, for those who supported the Revolution but wished to minimize its excesses, to refer to the "republic" rather than invoke ideas, such as "democracy," that might have been responsible for those excesses. In the writings of a historian

such as Jules Michelet or in the events of 1848, republicanism meant recapturing and consummating the spirit of 1789. But over time it came to offer an alternative to both radical socialism and democracy, on the one hand, and clericalism and reaction on the other. The central tenets of this doctrine were worked out progressively during the 19th century: an austere secular morality to replace that of the church; an active citizenry educated in public schools; a highly centralized, majoritarian government; a homogeneous culture, achieved through national education but also through a slow war of attrition against signs of diversity (for example, the campaigns against regional French dialects). In short, republicanism was a syncretic mix of political principles, some universal and some chauvinistic.

**R**epublicanism's relation to liberalism is a matter of much dispute today, even among those who have highlighted the dominant illiberalism of post-revolutionary French politics. Some have asserted that it was simply the form that liberalism took in France, and that the historical parenthesis of the Third Republic (1875–1940) saw the creation of a genuinely liberal political culture after a century of revolutions and reactions. Others have pointed out the difficulty of reconciling the theory and practice of the Third Republic with the classic theories of liberalism, even those of French thinkers such as Tocqueville and Constant. Much of the Third Republic's early history was marked by conflict over the principles of republicanism, whether over the secularization of the schools or, most memorably, over the Dreyfus Affair. And while it is true that France had established a relatively stable, quasi-liberal constitutional republic in the decades preceding World War I, it did so by marking its independence from liberal traditions of thought.

However one views the intellectual genealogy of republicanism, its later development distanced it further from liberalism, thanks to the profound transformations wrought by the years 1914–17. The destruction of the Great

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War seemed to make a mockery of republican civic morality and helped to inspire more radical aesthetic developments in the avant-garde. More important still for political intellectuals was the Russian Revolution. For the European Left as a whole this event was decisive: It marked the establishment of "real existing socialism" for the first time. In France this development had a very special resonance, however. For the Russian Revolution was not only an advance for the cause of socialism and the socialists; it was also a *revolution*, and therefore seemed to participate in the French national saga. Until then, the history of the Revolution had been a purely French affair, stretching from 1789 to 1848, then to the Paris Commune, and finally culminating (according to republican historiography) in the founding of the Third Republic. That revolution was over. But to those intellectuals for whom the Revolution was an eternal process, ever to be extended and re-conceived, the Third Republic was a betrayer. Therefore the Revolution was internationalized, with the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Soviet Union now serving as honorary *sans-culottes*.

**W**hat this meant during the interwar period was that intellectuals divided politically into two radical tendencies, each appealing to different elements of republicanism, but both hostile to a liberal interpretation of that tradition. On the right, one saw the growing influence of reactionary nationalists such as Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras, who began as anti-Dreyfusards before the Great War. On the left, one saw a turn away from the domestic tradition of French socialism and toward German philosophy for an understanding of the revolutionary age. Central in this regard was Russian émigré Alexandre Kojève, who shaped an entire generation of French intellectuals through his lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The core of Hegel's teaching, according to Kojève, was the doctrine of the "master-slave" dialectic in history, which he understood in the light of the early Marx (whose manuscripts had just ap-

peared) and early Heidegger (who was virtually unknown to the French at the time). With this so-called German turn in political thought, French illiberalism also took on a new cast among intellectuals. Whereas in the 19th century its language was either that of the church or of radical socialists, now the critique of liberal society was cast in the vocabulary of Hegel and Marx. This would remain its vocabulary until quite recently.

**I**f the defeat of fascism in World War II permanently discredited right-wing illiberalism among intellectuals, its left-wing varieties flourished in postwar continental Europe. This was especially true in France, where the humiliations of defeat and collaboration were taken as further evidence of liberalism's "obsolescence." Here, however, the political history of France and that of its intellectuals begin to diverge. Over the next 30 years, which have come to be called *les trente glorieuses*, France built two republics that were fundamentally liberal and a booming economy that utterly transformed the social landscape. The liberalization of postwar French society did not happen automatically. There remained the permanent challenge of the PCF and its unions; there was the untidy process of decolonization whose bloody denouement was the Algerian War; there were threatened military coups associated with that conflict; and, above it all, there was the unpredictable presence of Charles de Gaulle. But certainly by the mid-1960s it was clear that however "exceptional" France was, it was not about to turn to either fascism or communism, if only because the base of such movements had disappeared in the flowering of the affluent society. Nor was it a "republic" in the 19th-century sense. The Fifth Republic had a more liberal constitution, with a strong executive, a bicameral legislature, a constitutional court to check the legislature, and a welfare state that grew quickly within this framework. The severe secular morality of the republican schools had also disappeared, replaced by greater toleration of religion (which itself was less practiced)

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and a wider berth for individual self-expression.

This slow process of liberalization, which took place across Western Europe, is easier to see today than during the 1950s or '60s. But what made it even harder to see at the time was that French intellectuals were almost unanimous in their a priori rejection of liberal society and their adherence to some form of Marxism (and to the one party, the PCF, that claimed to offer the authoritative interpretation of Marxism). This history has been told many times before and need not be rehearsed here. What must be emphasized is how little relation all these intellectual putsches bore to the social transformations of the time. If anything, as many French writers today maintain, the history of postwar intellectual Marxism must be understood as a series of reactions to these transformations and the erosion of any hope of another revolution.

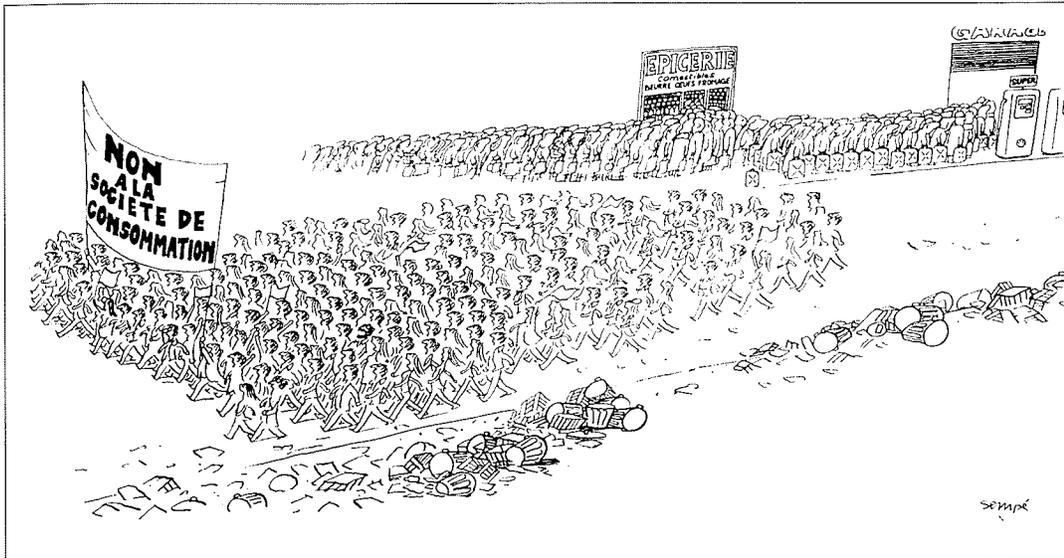
**A**t the time, however, the grip of Marxism on the minds of French intellectuals was almost complete. There were rare exceptions. One was Raymond Aron. Aron was a unique figure in postwar French intellectual life. Like his *petit camarade* Sartre, he was trained in the Hegelianism of the 1930s and had spent a short period in Germany during Hitler's rise to power. But unlike Sartre, Aron took from these experiences an appreciation of liberal skepticism and developed an enduring hostility to all forms of historical determinism, including that embodied in Marxism. He wrote many books on these themes during his long career, was a regular journalist, and helped to launch several important reviews. Nonetheless, Aron was almost entirely without influence among his fellow intellectuals in the postwar decades: "Better wrong with Sartre than right with Aron," the saying went. It was not until the eve of his death in 1983, after French intellectuals themselves had abandoned Marxism, that he began to be read more widely.

The Marxist Left of the immediate postwar decade had been shaped politically and intellectually by the currents of the '30s—by

the weakness of the Third Republic, by the Popular Front and the Great Depression, by Hegelianism, by surrealism. The generation of thinkers who became prominent during the following two decades, and who participated in structuralism (and what foreigners called post-structuralism), had mostly grown up in different circumstances. Their formative experiences were the war and the occupation, the reign of Stalinism among intellectuals in the early '50s, and perhaps most important, *les trente glorieuses*.

Structuralism is sometimes seen as a continuation of the French radicalism that was born in the '30s—as if Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida were direct descendants of Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. And there is a sense in which its lineage can be traced back to Kojève, who was the first to announce that "the end of history is the death of man, strictly defined." But in truth, structuralism's attitude toward politics has always been difficult to characterize. This was already evident in the early '60s, when the first structuralist works were roundly criticized by the PCF and its intellectual spokespersons, such as Sartre, as an abandonment of Marxism, if not a new form of social conservatism. On the other side, to anticommunists such as Aron structuralism represented an apolitical radicalization of the historical determinism already present in Hegel's "cunning of reason" and Marx's materialist dialectic. Whatever their differences, the older antagonists of the intellectual Cold War finally understood what they shared: the presuppositions of a modern humanism that held individual autonomy to be possible, to be the aim of modern politics, and to be discoverable through reason. All these assumptions structuralism denied.

This may be the key to understanding how the structuralist movements, which on the surface did not appear tied to any particular political doctrine, contributed to the long stream of French antiliberalism in the 1960s and '70s. Certainly the anthropological studies of Lévi-Strauss, the literary essays of



*Consumer society was one of the targets of the student uprising in May 1968. But consumerism proved hard to shake, even during the uprising—an irony noted by at least one contemporary artist.*

Barthes, and the psychoanalytic lectures of Lacan did not seem to be about politics at all; if anything, they signaled a retreat from the ideologically charged polemics of the '50s. Even the early writings of Foucault and Derrida steered clear of anything that could be construed as political thought. But in another sense they seemed to render everything political. For if autonomous individuals as conceived by the Enlightenment and the liberal tradition do not exist independently, if it is structures that produce them—whether those structures are linguistic, symbolic, cultural, psychological, ideological, “logocentric,” or simply those of “power”—then potentially every human experience can be interpreted politically through a political analysis of those structures. Structuralists themselves made a game of protesting such “caricatural” readings of their writings, just as many abjured the structuralist label. Nonetheless, this is precisely how their works were read in France: as profoundly political attacks on liberal bourgeois society.

At a time of rising affluence, the decline of the working class, the sclerosis of the PCF—in short, with the disappearance of the political world that Marxism had once described—struc-

turalism seemed to offer new possibilities for resistance. But now, rather than resisting in action the dehumanization of man on the basis of a rational analysis of history, one resisted in theory the ideas of “man,” “reason,” and “history” as the oppressive products of ideology.

The situation of antiliberalism in France after the rise of the New Left and the events of May 1968 was therefore highly incongruous. The intellectual reign of structuralism, which called into question every aspect of modern liberal life, also seemed to undercut all hope of escaping the tentacles of “power” through political action. If “man” and the “author” were dead, then clearly so was man as the author of his political acts. Moreover, the events of May not only failed to bring down the Fifth Republic but may have left it strengthened. To be sure, those events did much to break down hierarchical distinctions in everyday French life, making it less formal and more modern; in this sense it was a real cultural revolution. But the affluence, mobility, and individualism produced by economic growth had already taken their toll on the old idea of a unified Left made up of workers, their unions, the PCF, and the intellectuals. If

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anything, the events of May '68 reflected dissatisfactions with a consumer society that were expressed in the highly individualistic terms of that very society. Politically, May '68 marked the beginning of the end of Marxism, with Maoism and the "boutique" movements of the early '70s (feminism, ecologism, "Third Worldism") left glowing like embers of a dying fire. Intellectually, what remained of the postwar antiliberal tradition was supported by a mélange of structuralism, neo-Marxism, Nietzscheanism, Heideggerianism, and Freudianism—none of it political in the sense that Sartre would have recognized.

**I**t was in this somewhat confused context of progressive political liberalization and persistent intellectual hostility to it that the revival of liberal political thought eventually was to take place in the '80s. The key events were, once again, political. They began in the mid-'70s, long before the events of 1989 and the belated rethinking they provoked among the rest of the European Left. For some reason, world events that elicited little immediate response elsewhere in Western Europe—the translation of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, the butcheries in Cambodia, the flight of the boat people, the rise of Solidarity in Poland—suddenly set off a profound *crise de conscience* among the French. Why these particular events had such an effect, when innumerable others (Budapest 1956, Prague 1968) did not, is a question that future historians will have to answer.

Whatever the cause, the effect was real. In the space of a few years, intellectuals who once subscribed to Sartre's view that Marxism was the "unsurpassable horizon" of our time began to concede that communist totalitarianism might fall within that horizon and not be a historical accident. And those who had followed Foucault in seeing classrooms, hospital wards, and offices as thinly disguised concentration camps now confronted the real thing. By the end of the '70s, with the publication of "new philosophers" such as André Glucksmann (*The Master Thinkers*, 1977) and Bernard-Henri Lévy (*Barbarism with a Hu-*

*man Face*, 1977), the public record of postwar communism was finally a matter of frank public discussion, and a cooler look at Western liberal societies became possible. The "age of suspicion" was over.

The election of François Mitterrand as president of the republic in 1981, and the simultaneous arrival of the first Socialist plurality in parliament since the war, served as a capstone to this development. On one level, the Mitterrand years brought about a liberal normalization of the Fifth Republic, removing it from the long shadow of de Gaulle and the conservative parties that had ruled France in his name since 1958. But on a deeper level the election of Mitterrand and the Socialists represented the rapprochement of the nation's revolutionary tradition with the liberal institutions of the Fifth Republic. Rather than heralding *la gauche au pouvoir*, Mitterrand's presidency marked the end of a long tradition of political illiberalism and the birth of a "centrist" republic.

**T**he changes in the French intellectual climate over the past 15 years have been as profound as those on the political scene. Most significant has been the almost universal abandonment of the Hegelian, Marxist, and structuralist dogmas that nourished intellectual contempt for liberalism after the war. This shift has also signaled the demise of a certain conception of intellectuals themselves, as "master thinkers" whose philosophy of history or theory of power licensed them to deliver ex cathedra judgments on the political events of the day. This image of the French philosophes may still have its admirers in certain airless corners of American and British universities, but it has virtually disappeared in France. As a result, space has opened up for more serious and reasoned reflection on politics and the liberal age that France has now entered. During the 1980s, discussions of political philosophy centered on books that would have been unwritten, unpublished, or unread 10 years earlier: studies of important political thinkers of the past, theoretical treatises on human rights, essays on

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liberal government and society, even translations of Anglo-American political and moral philosophy of the "analytic" variety. A number of important new reviews were also founded, all concerned with contemporary liberal society and its problems.

**N**onetheless, it would be mistaken to speak of anything like a liberal consensus in French political thought today. Few French thinkers consider themselves liberals in an unqualified sense, and fewer still in an American or British sense. While it is not uncommon for an American or British political theorist to take up a "defense" of one version of liberalism or another, recent French political philosophy has been by and large diagnostic rather than promotional or programmatic. Indeed, there is an air of strangeness, or exteriority, accompanying French analyses of liberal society, as if they were *in* liberalism but not yet *of* it. Another aspect of recent French thought further distinguishes it from that of the British and Americans, and its roots go back to the phenomenon of "philosophical nationalism." This is its historical character, and particularly its concern with the French Revolution.

Ever since the Revolution, French political thought has been "historically conscious." But what is the relation between political philosophy and history? Is political philosophy only possible as systematic reflection on history, including the history of thought itself? Are there historical junctures after which certain political alternatives become literally unthinkable? Or is political philosophy precisely the rational overcoming of such false "historical consciousness"? These questions have been with Western philosophy ever since Rousseau and Hegel. But the French have been forced to confront them again, as they have tried to understand the period of their history that seems to have finished and the one that has now begun.

French thought about liberalism is therefore expressed in two different registers today. One is characterized by what might be called "ordinary" political theory about features of

liberal society: human rights, constitutional government, representation, class, individualism, and so forth. In another register, however, the French have been debating the method appropriate to the conduct of political philosophy as such, and to reflection on liberal society in particular.

Beginning in the 1930s, political theory in the strict sense—that is, rigorous, informed reflection on political principles, laws, customs, and institutions—progressively disappeared in France and was supplanted by "totalizing" philosophies of history. Either it was absorbed into a rationalist account of history (whether Hegelian or Marxist), or it was ignored in the name of structuralist theories of historical "difference." In neither case, however, did it prove possible to reflect philosophically upon liberalism in its own terms. Whatever differences separated these schools of thought, they all agreed that liberalism was illegitimate, as was any "naive," nonhistoricist study of it. To engage in political philosophy in France today and reflect on the liberal prospect therefore requires a prior defense of the enterprise itself, in an environment where its possibility has long been denied. Such an undertaking demands a direct encounter with the whole modern historicist tradition running from Hegel to Heidegger, and its French representatives from Kojève to Foucault.

Broadly speaking, three major tendencies in contemporary political thought have engaged this French historicist legacy and attempted either to move beyond it or to redefine it. Each reflects a different approach to thinking about political history in general and about the liberal experience within it. In general, the proponents of these approaches are sympathetic toward contemporary liberal society, but each has a different notion of what that society is, how it came about, where its strengths and weaknesses lie, and what its prospects might be.

The approach of Pierre Manent, a professor at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, takes its inspiration from the work of Leo Strauss, the German-born phi-

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philosopher who established an important school of political thought at the University of Chicago. Consequently, Manent's ideas will appear the most familiar to American readers. Like Strauss, Manent believes that liberalism must be seen as a development within modernity, which in turn must be considered in contrast to the ancient and medieval worlds that preceded it. In other words, modern liberalism must be understood historically as a product of the modern break with the past. However, like Strauss, Manent maintains that this divide was not the product of "history" as an impersonal force but rather was a conscious "project" conceived by the first modern philosophers (Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes) and carried out by their epigones in the centuries that followed. Therefore, to understand modern liberal politics fully, one must go beyond the presuppositions of modern history, escaping its limited horizon, and try to recover and reconsider the original philosophical break making its development possible.

**M**anent follows Strauss most closely in his history of philosophy and analysis of historicism. In *Naissances de la politique moderne* (The births of modern politics; 1977) Manent maintains that Machiavelli's break with classical thought was responsible for both Hobbes's scientific realism (the cool study of what "is") and Rousseau's utopianism (the restless pursuit of the "ought"). Modern historicism then arose as an attempt to bring the "is" and "ought" together, most compellingly in Hegel's rational dialectic of history.

When treating liberalism, however, Manent departs from Strauss by stressing the specifically Christian context in which philosophical liberalism was born. In *An Intellectual History of Liberalism* (1994), Manent emphasizes the fact that the "theological-political problem" in Europe did not arise in a homogeneous city-state or empire but rather out of the tension between universal Christian churches and particular absolutist monarchies. Political power and religious opinion were

theoretically separated quite early in European history, and this separation paved the way for their actual sundering by liberalism beginning in the 17th century. All the dynamics and problems of modern liberal societies, Manent suggests, can be traced back to this radical division of realms, which not only rid liberal politics of religion but also cast doubt on any claims to know what is natural and good for human beings.

**I**n his subtle study, *Tocqueville et la nature de la démocratie* (Tocqueville and the nature of democracy; 1982), Manent pursues this reasoning; however, his conclusions about contemporary liberal society are ambiguous, or at least open to interpretation. On the one hand, he appears to regret the "softening" of human nature brought about by modernity. On the other, he considers liberty and self-government to be important compensations for whatever modern humanity has lost, so long as it uses them wisely and learns, as Manent puts it, to "love democracy moderately."

Luc Ferry, professor of philosophy at the University of Caen, and Alain Renaut, who teaches at the University of Paris (Sorbonne), do not share Manent's appreciation of premodern political thought, stating flatly that "there is nothing to be learned from the Greeks," whose philosophy they consider to be so bound up with a false, hierarchical cosmology as to be alien to our democratic age. They too believe that historicism is mistaken and that it has had a pernicious effect on modern politics. But unlike Manent, they blame this historicism not on modern philosophy as such but on an "antihumanism" that grew up within it. Ferry and Renaut wish to remain secular and resolutely modern, yet, simultaneously, avoid what they see as the dangerous political doctrines that have grown out of certain modern philosophies.

Despite their irreconcilable differences with Manent regarding the "quarrel" of the ancients and the moderns, Ferry and Renaut share his view that modern politics and its problems have no history independent of the

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history of modern philosophy. The philosophical history they recount is fundamentally different from Manent's, however, because it focuses on modern theories of the self—and in particular on a distinction they make between the "subject" and the "individual"—rather than on theories of politics as such. Ever since Heidegger, Continental thought has conventionally seen in modern philosophy the relentless rise of a humanist "subjectivity," which Heidegger blamed for the birth of destructive technology, mass society, and much else. Ferry and Renaut argue instead that after Kant and Johann Fichte the idea of "subjectivity" was abandoned in favor of a modern "individualism" that carried with it the notion of a surreptitious order emerging from the interaction of individuals. This "antihumanist" conception of an unconsciously created historical order began as a rationalistic one in Leibniz's theodicy and Hegel's "cunning of reason," but later became an irrational and even more dangerous idea in the works of Nietzsche and Heidegger. Ferry and Renaut have not hesitated to draw political conclusions from this philosophical history. Most contentiously, they have argued that any political movement appealing to Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, or Heidegger is fundamentally individualistic and antihumanist in nature.

The only way out of this modern individualism, Ferry and Renaut claim, is to reconceive a "modern humanism" that is neither "historicist" nor "metaphysical"—that is, a philosophy of the subject that makes universal political and moral judgments possible without appeals to religion, tradition, or human nature. However, what they mean by the "subject" is often obscured in their writings, which up to now have mainly been critical and directed against their adversaries. Still, it is clear what they wish such a theory of subjectivity to undergird: a new defense of universal, rational norms in morals and politics, and especially a defense of human rights.

A third approach to political theory being pursued in France today still attempts to reflect directly and systematically upon the historical

development of modern liberal societies. It is a species of historicism, though it is impossible to place it in a single line of descent from Hegel and Marx, or Nietzsche and Heidegger. Its roots are instead to be found in French historical anthropology. Unlike the Anglo-American liberal tradition, which has been closely allied with economic science since the 18th century, French political thought has repeatedly turned to anthropology when seeking a theory of human behavior. Many specifically French reasons underlie this attraction to anthropology, the most important of which probably is the problem of explaining (or explaining away) religious experience after the French Revolution. The "scientific" study of religion culminating in the work of Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss actually begins in the 19th-century religious theories of August Comte, Saint-Simon, and even Joseph de Maistre. Ever since, French political philosophy has taken on an "anthropological" cast whenever it has had to treat religion directly.

**T**he anthropologist who has most influenced the latest generation of French political thinkers is Louis Dumont, a figure little known abroad outside professional circles. Dumont has become central in France for the simple reason that he abandoned the Hegelian and Marxist presuppositions that had crept into historical anthropology and focused instead on the problem of modern individualism as first set out by Tocqueville. Dumont began his anthropological research on the Indian caste system. But even his first book on this subject, *Homo hierarchicus* (1966), which begins with reflections on Tocqueville, made it clear that his ambition was to understand the nature of modern life. Dumont's work rests on his distinction between "holistic" societies, whose ideology is "hierarchy," and "individualistic" societies, whose ideology is "equality" (which also, he says, implies "freedom"). Although all societies contain individuals, holistic societies are organized according to principles that do not recognize the individual as the ultimate

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source of value. Hierarchy is a moral ideology rather than a system of political or economic power, one in which society's claims are placed above those of individuals. Dumont's early writings described the Indian caste system in these hierarchical terms, in an effort to recapture the strangeness of holistic society and contrast it to our individualistic presuppositions.

Since then, Dumont's work has centered almost exclusively on the rise of modern Europe, what he calls its "ideology," and lately on the different national forms that this ideology has taken. Assuming that the "hierarchy" of contemporary nonmodern societies is comparable to that of premodern Europe (a debatable presupposition), he has set forth an influential theory of the development of the modern world out of the spirit of individualism. Dumont believes that individualism was born in early Christianity and with it grew the ideology of equality and liberty that challenged the values of ancient hierarchy. European history from the arrival of Christianity until the French Revolution was essentially driven by the tension between these two ideologies, a struggle that finally produced the modern state and the liberal separation of economic relations from both religious and political control. Dumont does not celebrate this history. On the contrary, he believes that the ideology of individualism ignored the fundamentally holistic nature of all societies, and that modern life is beset by problems arising from its persistent unwillingness to accept this fact. Modern racism, anti-Semitism, and totalitarianism must all be understood as holistic reactions to an individualistic ideology that refuses to recognize the natural priority of social claims over those of individuals.

Like Tocqueville's reflections on America and post-revolutionary France, Dumont's anthropological writings assume a philosophy of history without fully developing it. History is treated as a "thing," a continuous stream of human experience that shifts direction at pre-

cise junctures; between those junctures, it is the logical working out of an idea born at one and realized at the next. For Dumont, as for Tocqueville, the birth of Christianity and the French Revolution are such epochal junctures. Since the Revolution, humankind has become *modern*, living in an age unlike any other. We have been freed from the power of one idea (hierarchy), only to begin serving a second (equality). These ideas are ideologies, however, not reasoned philosophies of the sort analyzed by Manent, Ferry, and Renaut; they are imbedded in social structures, which in turn shape human consciousness. Contradictions within society can be understood by studying the ideology dominating it, and thereby perhaps be moderated, but the ideology itself appears to be inescapable. Faced with the bleak picture of modern democratic society dominated by individualism, Tocqueville appealed to historical providence; Manent, Ferry, and Renaut appeal to the possibility of transhistorical philosophy. Dumont offers no such consolation.

Certainly the most ambitious attempt to incorporate these anthropological insights on ancient hierarchy and modern individualism into a more rigorous philosophy of history is *Le désenchantement du monde* (The disenchantment of the world; 1985) by Michel Gauchet of the École des Hautes Études. The book's subtitle presents it as a "political history of religion." In fact, it is a speculative history of politics that considers the development of the state as a function of changes in religious consciousness, or what Gauchet calls a dynamic of transcendence. Primitive man, according to Gauchet, organized his world by placing its source outside of himself in unchanging gods, to whom human beings owed everything. This was once the condition of primitive societies everywhere and remains so for those that survive. But several millennia ago a great historical caesura opened up with the establishment of the great world religions, which presented their gods as changeable and distant,

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though now approachable. At that moment humanity for the first time began to exercise control over its own world; once the gods departed from their terrestrial abode, the state grew up to occupy their place. In other words, the new religions and the state emerged together out of this "dynamic of transcendence," in opposition to primitive societies, which had neither. The key to understanding modern history, according to Gauchet, is to understand how humanity has sought to "possess" itself in politics by slowly "dispossessing" itself of any external debt or meaning in religion.

**G**auchet argues in the schematic second half of *Le désenchantement du monde* and in his other writings on psychology and politics that if liberalism is the product of God's retreat and humanity's advance in history, liberalism can be understood primarily, if not exclusively, in light of this process. He maintains that the assertion of human subjectivity has meant the progressive dominance of democratic individualism in politics but also, among other repercussions of the gods' withdrawal, the rise of ideology, bureaucratization, nationalism, growing state power, even totalitarianism. The more humanity is free, it appears, the greater is social power. Gauchet offers no escape from modern humanity's psychological and political situation in this disenchanting world, only the hope that, having witnessed the death of God, we will cease trying to occupy his place. "The death of God does not mean man becomes God," Gauchet concludes, "but on the contrary that man is strictly obliged to renounce the dream of his own divinity."

The debate over historicism in political philosophy defines only one axis of contemporary French thought. It is a central one, however, because it directly confronts the dominant mode of conceiving political philosophy that existed in France from Kojève down to Foucault. Manent, Ferry, and Renaut all reject that tradition outright

and have set off in different directions; Gauchet rejects it as well but appears intent on rehabilitating aspects of historicism in his own anthropological fashion. Whether these four philosophers will finally succeed in escaping Hegel is an open question; they certainly are not the first to try.

Indeed, it was Foucault himself who, in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1970, made the famous pronouncement that his generation, "whether through logic or epistemology, whether through Marx or through Nietzsche, is attempting to flee Hegel." Why that generation failed is a question that deserves to be posed today. One answer that suggests itself on the basis of these newer works is that Foucault's generation may not have been *sufficiently* Hegelian. Foucault also remarked in that same lecture that "truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in what permits us to think against Hegel, of what remains Hegelian." But to "think Hegel," even against him, means if nothing else to "think the present" in Hegelian fashion. And that present, in the postwar world, has been liberal.

Yet the liberal present was precisely what postwar French thinkers dogmatically refused to think through in its own terms. For all their professed desire to escape the presuppositions of prewar Hegelianism and Marxism, they retained one as an unreasoned article of faith: the illegitimacy of liberalism. This was a political presupposition, not a philosophical conclusion, and it trapped them unwittingly in the French Hegelian web. Perhaps what has permitted these younger thinkers to begin to disentangle themselves is the gradual disappearance of that political presupposition from French life, an event for which they are not responsible but from which they have benefited. Now free to "think liberalism," they are also free to "think Hegel" clearly, and therefore free to begin thinking clearly against him.

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# THE PERIODICAL OBSERVER

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

## Losing Control of Immigration

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

In this nation of immigrants, illegal immigration remains one of the decade's most highly charged issues. By official estimates, some 3.5 million aliens now live in the United States illegally, and 200,000 to 300,000 more are coming each year. Mexicans and Central Americans account for more than half of the influx, but illegal immigrants also come from Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, and Canada. Congress tried to stem the tide eight years ago by strengthening border enforcement and imposing sanctions on employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens. But the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 only temporarily slowed the illegal influx. Meanwhile, the same law gave legal status to more than three million illegal aliens already living in the United States. The Immigration Act of 1990—which increased legal immigration by 35 percent—granted stays of deportation to their family members.

Easy immigration has many supporters, from those who see it as an American tradition to free-market conservatives. Employers who use unskilled workers on farms, in the garment industry, or in hotels and restaurants have welcomed aliens as a source of cheap labor. Liberal activists see the United States as a sanctuary, and have pressed to expand the rights of illegal aliens, hoping to guarantee them not only a right to virtually all government social services but even a right to vote. All in all, the distinction between legal and illegal immigrants seems to have become increasingly blurred.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, a *New York Times*/CBS News survey last year found that 68 percent of Americans mistakenly believe that most recent immigrants are here illegally. (In fact, illegal aliens amount to perhaps one-fourth of the foreigners who permanently settle in the United States each year.) According to a 1993 Gallup poll, 65 percent of Americans think that there are too many immigrants entering the country—almost double the percentage that took that view in 1965. Even naturalized Americans want to restrict entry. In the

*American Experiment* (Summer 1994), a publication of the Manhattan Institute's Center for the New American Community, Joel Kotkin, a Senior Fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute, notes that three-fourths of Mexican Americans, two-thirds of Cuban Americans, and four-fifths of Puerto Ricans tell pollsters that there is too much immigration.

"Americans who are frustrated with our country's inability to regulate immigration might reflect on the experience of other industrial nations, even those with less inclusive traditions," observes free-lance writer Richard Rothstein in *Dissent* (Fall 1993). Western Europe is now home to some five million "undocumented" immigrants. France has one million; Germany has nearly two million Turkish immigrants, who came as "guest workers" in better days and never went home. Even Japan has an immigration problem, Rothstein points out. To fill a need for low-wage workers, employers have recruited some 200,000 South American workers who have partial Japanese ancestry. "But professional smuggling rings are already at work importing South Americans with documents faking Japanese bloodlines," notes Rothstein. Half of the 30,000

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Peruvians now in Japan may be there illegally. Also in the country are hundreds of thousands of people from Brazil, Malaysia, Thailand, Iran, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who overstayed their tourist visas. In 1992 alone, some 280,000 foreigners came to Japan on short-term visas and then disappeared.

**T**here seem to be more and more immigrants on the move everywhere in the world, observes the University of Delaware's Mark J. Miller, guest editor of an issue of the *Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* (July 1994) on immigration control. Perhaps 100 million people now live in countries in which they were not born.

"The presence of illegal immigrants . . . should not be taken to mean that states cannot control their borders," Gary P. Freeman, a political scientist at the University of Texas at Austin, argues in the same issue of the *Annals*. "Just as no country is willing to expend the resources and bear the costs necessary to reduce crime to near zero, neither would it be rational to try to establish impervious borders." Most nations try to keep illegal immigration down to "a reasonable level."

How effectively a nation can police its borders depends a lot on what those borders are like. The island state of Australia has perhaps the least serious control problem, although even it had difficulties with students and other visitors overstaying their short-term visas during the 1980s, sociologist Robert Birrell, of Monash University in Melbourne, writes in the *Annals*. The United States—with a 1,945-mile border with Mexico, and illegal entry common at airports and by sea—has the world's worst immigration-control problem, notes Gary Freeman. Each year, the U.S. Border Patrol apprehends about one million people trying to sneak into the country from Mexico.

In recent years, the United States has taken a much less severe approach to illegal immigration than Western European nations have. "As Europe has shut down many of the legal entry routes in recent years," Freeman says, "there has been an upsurge in illegal entry or visa overstayers, and official attitudes have hardened. Enforcement is aided by the European practice of requiring national identity cards and

by the extensive cooperation between European states on the matter." All the major European nations except Britain have some form of employer sanctions; although initially ineffective, they are now vigorously enforced in most countries.

In the United States, by all accounts, the employer sanctions established in 1986 have not been effective. They are hard to enforce without a reliable system of worker identification, and the production of fraudulent documents has become a thriving underground business. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) devotes only limited resources to enforcement of the sanctions, and INS officials in the field often put a higher priority on apprehending aliens and deporting those who are criminals, Rosanna Perotti, a political scientist at Hofstra University, writes in the *Annals*.

**W**hile the original impetus behind the 1986 and 1990 legislation was restrictionist, in keeping with public sentiment, Daniel J. Tichenor, a Research Fellow at the Brookings Institution, notes in separate articles in *Polity* (Spring 1994) and the *Responsive Community* (Summer 1994), the end result was "[to] create new alien rights and unleash new forces for increased immigration." This curious outcome, he says, was the work of a fragile coalition of rights-minded liberals and free-market conservatives. The former wanted to aid the oppressed seeking to come to the United States from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia, while the latter aimed to help U.S. employers. Both coalition partners, for different reasons, opposed a reliable worker-identification system. The free-market conservatives obtained an exemption from employer sanctions for small businesses. "Lax enforcement of employer sanctions by the Reagan and Bush administrations, which viewed them as another regulatory burden on U.S. businesses," Tichenor says, "further undermined immigration control."

The failure to get illegal immigration under control not only breeds disrespect for the law but plays into the hands of leaders who would severely restrict all immigration, observes Joel Kotkin in the *American Experiment*. Those who rush protectively to confer various rights on illegal aliens ignore the role that citizenship—carrying responsibilities as well as rights—must play in immigration.

## Disorder and the Courts

"Disorder and the Court" by George L. Kelling and Catherine M. Coles, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1994), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036; "Graffiti" by André Henderson, in *Governing* (Aug. 1994), 2300 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

Fighting "serious" crime by lengthening prison sentences, banning some semi-automatic weapons, and putting more cops on the beat, as President Clinton's federal crime legislation provides, is all well and good. But the more common "crime" problem in many urban neighborhoods, observe Kelling, a professor of criminal justice at Boston's Northeastern University, and Coles, a cultural anthropologist, is disorderly behavior, such as panhandling, public drinking and drug use, prostitution, public urination and defecation, loitering, and defacing property with graffiti. "For most citizens, disorder is the crime problem," Kelling and Coles say. Unfortunately, they argue, the nation's courts frequently fail to grasp this.

Whatever the trend in crime statistics may be, Kelling and Coles say, the "in your face" experiences that citizens have every day on the streets "tell them that things are out of control and worsening." Just to prevent and clean up graffiti, municipalities spent \$7 billion last year, Henderson reports in *Governing*. In many places, vandals have progressed from spray paint to etching, using everything from drill bits to diamond rings. "It is the fastest-growing class of graffiti, and authorities seem powerless to stop it," Henderson writes.

In 1982, Kelling and political scientist James Q. Wilson advanced the "broken windows" thesis: Just as an unrepaired broken window signals that no one cares and invites more broken windows, so unattended disorderly behavior leads to more disorder and, in all likelihood, serious crime. Recent research has buttressed the thesis. In *Disorder and Decline* (1990), Wesley Skogan, using data from 40 neighborhoods in six cities,

found that disorder was the single most significant "precursor" of serious crime and urban decay.

There is other evidence that controlling disorder works to reduce crime. In 1989, New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority began enforcing its rules against panhandling and other disorderly behavior in the city's subways. A homeless-advocacy group sued, and federal judge Leonard B. Sand decreed that begging deserves First Amendment protection. An appeals court, however, overturned his decision and let the antipanhandling rules stand. Between 1990 and the end of the first quarter of 1994, robberies in the subways dropped by more than 52 percent and all felonies by 46 percent.

Other courts have refused to follow that appeals court's lead, however. In one New York City case, for example, Judge Robert W. Sweet averred: "A peaceful beggar poses no threat to society. The beggar has arguably only committed the offense of being needy." The answer, he said, was not to criminalize begging but to address its "root cause."

For most of American history, there were state and municipal laws against begging and vagrancy. In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down an antivagrancy statute, and 11 years later it overturned a California law requiring loiterers

to show identification and account for their presence at a police officer's request. Before long, similar laws in other states were struck down. In 1965, the Supreme Court said that prohibiting "loitering for the purpose of" committing a specific unlawful act, such as prostitution, was acceptable, so states and cities enacted more narrow antiloitering measures of this type.

Recently, however, judges have overturned some of even these laws on First Amendment grounds. Legislators are now enacting still-more-specific laws. One proscribes loitering for the purpose of asking for money more than once. It would be a tragedy, the authors say, if these laws, too, are not allowed to stand.



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## Reagan's Monument

"Reagan in Retrospect" by A. James Reichley, in *The World & I* (May 1994), 3400 New York Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

First critics of Ronald Reagan's presidency dismissed him as an affable buffoon. Then, when the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were liberated, they denied that the Reagan administration and its budget-busting arms buildup played a crucial role. Finally, a few academics conceded that the administration's policies contributed, but denied that Reagan himself did. Once again, Reagan's critics are mistaken, contends Reichley, a former Brookings Institution researcher who is now a Visiting Fellow at Georgetown University.

Reagan may have been ill informed about many things; his attention may sometimes have wandered; he may not have chosen some of his subordinates wisely. "But the image of Reagan as a mere front for others will not stand," Reichley says. "Both the overall ideological direction of the Reagan administration and decisions on most major issues came from the president himself."

Although he was the most "ideological" president since Herbert Hoover, he "was generally able to avoid the rigidity" that trapped Hoover. In negotiations, Reagan's practice was to hold firm until the last moment—and then make a deal. "His success in foreign policy came largely from this trait," Reichley believes. At the Reykjavik summit in 1986, instead of ratifying prearranged agreements, Reagan entered into freewheeling negotiations with Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev. Pundits were aghast—but Reagan laid the groundwork for the major arms-control agreement of 1987.

"Far from being the puppet of master manipulators within his administration," Reichley says, "Reagan often, for better or worse, made key decisions that were opposed by most of his advisers." He insisted in 1982 on sticking with both a tax cut and a defense buildup, and later he stubbornly pushed ahead with the Strategic Defense Initiative. Sometimes—as when in 1985 he overruled the secretaries of state and defense to go ahead with the sale of arms to Iran—Reagan made bad decisions. But *he* made them. Even in the Iran-Contra affair, Reichley says, it eventually became clear "that whether or not Reagan was aware of exactly how funds were

being channeled to the Contras, the overall policy being pursued was his."

The "returns" are not all in yet on the effects of the Reagan administration's domestic policies. But victory in the Cold War, Reichley says, "should be monument enough for any man."

## City of Smiles

"Washington's Nice Problem" by David Segal, in *The Washington Monthly* (Sept. 1994), 1611 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

"If you want a friend in Washington," Harry Truman is supposed to have said, "bring a dog." More recently, Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan is quoted by reporter Bob Woodward in his best seller, *The Agenda* (1994), as saying: "This is a town that is full of evil people. If you can't deal with every day having people try to destroy you, you shouldn't even think of coming down here." But the misanthropes have it all wrong, insists Segal, an editor at the *Washington Monthly*: "The truth is, Washington is a nice town filled with nice people being nice to each other." In fact, Segal believes, niceness is one of the big problems of modern government.

Most of Washington's "players" (as those brimming with enthusiasm for the great game of government are wont to describe the influential and near-influential) come to town for particular jobs. Since these are not lifetime positions, the politicians, political appointees, and their many invaluable aides are "always facing the prospect of looking elsewhere for work—or going home." And after they have been in Washington for a while, and had the experience of working on "important issues" with "important people," they frequently do not want to go home. What to do? Make friends, make contacts—and make nice to anyone who might be useful to you. Not all the relationships are fake, either, Segal points out. Many Washingtonians who knew Representative Dan Rostenkowski (D.-Ill.) felt genuine sadness for him earlier this year when he was indicted on 17 charges of defrauding the public and had to quit his House Ways and Means Committee chairmanship.

The trouble with all the collective chummi-

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ness, Segal argues, is that it makes most people in public office unwilling to rock the boat, even when the craft is headed in the wrong direction. Members of Congress are too nice to their colleagues, too nice to the bureaucrats whose work

they are supposed to oversee, and too nice to the lobbyists who importune them and give them money (but not for specific favors, of course). What a better world it would be, Segal believes, if nice guys in Washington really did finish last.

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## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

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### *A Vision Thing Overdose*

"The Recovery of Internationalism" by David C. Hendrickson, in *Foreign Affairs* (Sept.-Oct. 1994), 58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Candidate Bill Clinton's message in the 1992 campaign was plain: President George Bush was neglecting the domestic welfare. He was much too preoccupied with foreign affairs. So well did the Democrat get his message across, observes Hendrickson, a political scientist at Colorado College, that an important fact was obscured: Clinton was calling for a far more ambitious foreign policy than Bush's. He not only embraced the incumbent's idea of a "new world order" but promised to use trade as a lever to press China on human rights and to bring democracy to Haiti and Cuba. He also vowed to stop Serbian aggression in Bosnia with air strikes and other means. And the promises did not end there.

Alas, in one area after another, the Clinton administration subsequently has awkwardly retreated, causing a loss of U.S. prestige abroad and public disillusionment at home. The withdrawal from "extravagant" internationalism is necessary, Hendrickson argues, but it should not be allowed to turn into a rout, lest the United States abandon its proper course, "moderate" internationalism.

Attempting to extend democracy and human rights through trade embargoes, whether in Asia or the Caribbean, Hendrickson contends, not only harms innocent people but violates the fundamental rule that states should not intervene in the internal affairs of other states. Although the United States has often departed from that standard, it has "seldom formally disavowed" it,

and with good reason: Observance of the rule contributes to international peace. Nothing would bring closer Harvard political scientist Samuel P. Huntington's prophesied "clash of civilizations," Hendrickson observes, than "a determined effort to deny legitimacy to nondemocratic states." As the administration finally seemed to realize in the case of China (although not yet in the Caribbean), the United States should try to help those states that are moving toward free markets and democracy, "without undertaking warlike measures against nondemocratic states for the crime of being nondemocratic."

In trying to achieve its ambitious aims of improving human rights in China, keeping North Korea from getting nuclear weapons, and halting Serb aggression in Bosnia, Hendrickson says, the administration found that its initial goals could not be achieved except possibly through unilateral action—and that such action would "endanger interests of greater weight than those that would be secured" by it.

The administration's "activist agenda," Hendrickson says, "not only violates the traditional meaning of internationalism," which forbids intervention and preventive war, but it also "regularly places the United States in opposition to allied states and other regional powers." Internationalism, by contrast, "has always been identified with the virtues of acting in concert rather than unilaterally." The Clinton administration has been wise to retreat from many of its "advanced positions," Hendrickson says. Unfortunately, the administration has too often given "the appearance of being dragged, kicking and screaming, to a more limited and sensible policy."

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## Is the Pentagon Your Friend?

"Welcome to the Junta: The Erosion of Civilian Control of the U.S. Military" by Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., in *Wake Forest Law Review* (Summer 1994), Wake Forest University, School of Law, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27109.

Opinion surveys show that Americans now have more confidence in the military than in any other

institution. The hostility toward those in uniform so evident during the Vietnam War—and in earlier periods of American history—has disappeared, and the "can do" military is seen as virtually the only part of government that works. A 1993 Gallup poll found that 32 percent of Americans have a "great deal" of confidence in the armed forces while only 19 percent have as much faith in the president, and only eight percent in Congress (which, accord-

ing to another survey, half the populace regards as corrupt). Once, Americans detested "standing armies"; now, they revile their democratically elected political leaders.

Dunlap, an air force lieutenant colonel, finds these trends alarming. Not that Americans need fear a military coup. Today's officers "are no more *consciously* disposed toward the improper aggrandizement of power" than past ones, he writes. The danger comes from the growing, and increasingly unchecked, influence of the military in American life.

In 1981, Congress committed the armed forces to the "war against drugs." Today, the \$1.2 billion program includes regular patrols by troops—more than 5,000 on any given day—in certain high-crime urban neighborhoods and along American borders. "America is witnessing the beginning of . . . a *national* uniformed police agency," Dunlap contends. Last year, Congress authorized another expansion of the civilian role of the military. The armed services are now involved in local schools, the provision of medical care to underserved communities, programs for high school dropouts, and disaster relief.

This stepped-up involvement in civilian affairs is popular not only with an increasing

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## At Sea in the World

In *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Summer 1994), former secretary of state Henry Kissinger points to profound sources of confusion in U.S. foreign policy.

*How might America apply the concept of equilibrium in the post-modern world? In order to apply the concept of the balance of power, you have to know what your vital interests are. What is it you will defend no matter how it is challenged? America has never faced that issue before. It did have the Monroe Doctrine, which was gradually expanded until it had attained a hegemonic character. But that was mostly in relation to conjectural, not actual, threats.*

*America has never had a concrete definition of the vital interest in the way Britain did when it maintained that the Low Countries must never be occupied by a major Continental power, or in the way France did when it was still dominant and adhered to the rule that Central Europe must not be controlled by a single power.*

*In this same way on a global scale, it is a vital American interest to see to it that Eurasia not be controlled by a single power center. In essence, we have fought two wars over this issue.*

*With respect to modern Europe, I think we have learned to live with a United Europe, though probably because we don't think it can be more powerful than we are. If all the countries of Asia formed a single group, it would pose a serious long-term problem for America.*

*Therefore, in Asia—in the interplay of Japan, Russia, China, Korea, and Southeast Asia—we are in a position of having to play a role very similar to that of Britain in the 19th century vis-à-vis Europe. The trouble is that we have no theory or experience for such a role. The diplomacy sketched here would require us to be closer to each of the participants than they are to each other. . . .*

*The way you get outstanding policy is to think about your basic concept so that when something important comes along you don't have to discuss the goal and can focus on the tactics. But if everything has to be analyzed from scratch as the deadline approaches, it is human nature that we prepare for the photo opportunity.*

number of senior officers but with the public. Soldiers are no longer the dregs of society: "With 94 percent of military recruits possessing high school diplomas, enlisted personnel are better educated than the general populace. Virtually all officers have graduated from college, and most senior officers hold post-graduate degrees."

Free of the "civilianizing" influence of the draft, the armed services are also more united than ever, thanks to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, and more politicized, thanks to the legacy of Vietnam. Well-versed in international relations, congressional politics, and public relations, most high-ranking officers today "are intellectually prepared to challenge political leaders, particularly when they believe military interests are at stake." And civilian leaders, from President Clinton on down, increasingly lack any military experience or knowledge.

The commitment of those in the armed forces to the democratic political system, while real, is abstract, Dunlap points out: "Military personnel are untroubled by the authoritarian system in which they live; indeed, they cherish the harmony it provides. [They] do not necessarily admire or desire the unbridled individualism enjoyed by civilian society." As its civilian responsibilities multiply, Dunlap warns, the military may start "to assume it has the right, and even the *obligation*, to intervene in a wide range of activities when it perceives it can advance a broadly defined notion of the national interest."

## Sons of the South

"Dixie's Dove: J. William Fulbright, the Vietnam War, and the American South" by Randall Bennett Woods, in *The Journal of Southern History* (Aug. 1994), Rice University, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, Texas 77251.

Historian C. Vann Woodward claimed in 1968 that by expanding U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk had betrayed their southern heritage. The South's history of "defeat and failure . . . frustration and poverty . . . slavery and its long aftermath of racial injustice," he argued, should have led them to see things from the Viet-



"A Senator Fulbright to see you, Sire. Seems he can't reconcile himself to your infallibility."

By 1966, Senator J. William Fulbright was a leading critic of President Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam policy.

namese point of view. Ironically, says Woods, a historian at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Johnson and Rusk did appreciate "the burden of southern history"—and it helped inspire them to intervene in Vietnam. One of their most powerful opponents, however, was another son of Dixie, Senator J. William Fulbright (D.-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. His convictions sprang in part from a very different reading of the South's history.

Johnson had encountered in the Hill Country of Texas, and Rusk, in the hills of Georgia, "poverty, racial exploitation, ignorance, and human degradation," Woods notes. The experience turned them into reformers, representatives of "southern liberalism at its best and at its worst." Such liberalism produced the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, Medicare, the War on Poverty, and other Great Society measures. But it also bred in Johnson and Rusk, "if not a desire to carry the blessings of liberty and democracy to Southeast Asia, at least a wish to create a viable society in South Vietnam when forced by the exigencies of the Cold War to do so." In Johnson's eyes, the Vietnamese peasants were much like the poor farm laborers of the South.

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Fulbright, the son of a wealthy farmer and banker who settled in Fayetteville, a small university town in the northwest corner of Arkansas, "had almost no personal contact with the poverty and racism characteristic of much of the South," Woods notes. Although he supported Johnson's Great Society and was one of the era's foremost spokesmen for liberal internationalism, Fulbright was in some ways deeply conservative. His opposition to the war, Woods says, stemmed from his determination "to preserve the traditional features of Anglo-American civilization—a republican form of government, rule by an educated elite, reverence for the law and tradition, political stability, and a humane free enterprise system." Fulbright feared that LBJ's unwise venture in Vietnam was endangering America's own republican institutions. Imperialism and republicanism were not compatible.

"If Fulbright's philosophy was rooted in the Anglophilia and class-consciousness of Arkansas's planting aristocracy, it grew also out of the mind-set of the southern highlanders who populated the Ozark mountains," Woods writes. "Their salient features—a stubborn independence and an ingrained tendency to resist established authority—contributed significantly to Fulbright's stance toward the war in Vietnam." So did his opposition to the Civil Rights movement, which he saw as largely just another effort by the North to impose its will and culture on the South.

Looking upon Southeast Asia with a southerner's historical memory, Woods says, Fulbright was led "to identify both with his own nation, embroiled in a hopeless war half a world away, and with Vietnam, struggling desperately to fend off a larger imperial power."

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## ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

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### *Turning Grain Into Gold*

"The Coming Boom in American Agriculture" by Thomas J. Duesterberg, in *Hudson Briefing Paper* (May 1994), Hudson Institute, Herman Kahn Center, P.O. Box 26-919, Indianapolis, Ind. 46226.

It is no small irony that America's oldest industry is one of its strongest. Despite floods in the Midwest and drought in the South, U.S. agricultural exports in 1993 were close to the all-time high of \$43 billion. The surplus in agricultural products cut the overall U.S. trade deficit by more than \$19 billion. Now, argues Duesterberg, director of the Hudson Institute's Competitiveness Center, if the United States can take advantage of huge markets developing in Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere, U.S. farmers and food processors could sell an additional \$90 billion worth of their products overseas.

The key is rapid economic growth in East Asia and Latin America, including Chile, Argentina, and Mexico. As incomes go up, Duesterberg points out, so do appetites for more highly nu-

tritious foods such as milk products, meats, fruits, and vegetables. Asia's three billion people now consume, on average, only about 11 grams of high-quality protein per day, while the affluent Japanese take in about 52 grams per day (which is 20 fewer grams than Americans ingest). In recent years, China's consumption of pork has increased by three million tons annually, while in India milk consumption has grown by about two million tons per year.

If the trends toward higher incomes and better diets continue in Asia, estimates Dennis Avery, director of the Hudson Institute's Center for Global Food Issues, consumption of livestock and poultry there will grow by 500 percent over the next 20 years. The annual demand for grain alone would grow by 200 million tons.

It is often said that American farmers are the most productive and efficient in the world, and the United States is far and away the leading exporter of farm products. But that does not guarantee a bigger U.S. share of the market. The United States over the last decade has seen no substantial increase in its total farm exports.

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Despite the end of the Cold War and the expansion of global trade, most nations still believe that they should "feed themselves," and many, including Japan and those of the European Union, provide massive subsidies to their farmers. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other agreements have only begun to open foreign markets, Duesterberg says.

A looming obstacle to U.S. farmers is the effort by "zealots" at home to ban the use of pesticides and biotechnology, which lift farm productivity without posing significant dangers to the environment, Duesterberg says. "A far-greater . . . environmental catastrophe," he writes, "would ensue if the world's farmers cut down forests equal in size to the entire land mass of South America—which is what they would have to do to meet world food demand using only organic farming." Duesterberg's formula for the 21st century might be summed up by the slogan: A free hand at home, free markets abroad.

### *Back to Hearth and Home?*

"Are Women Leaving the Labor Force?" by Howard V. Hayghe, in *Monthly Labor Review* (July 1994), Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C. 20212.

Are more and more wives and mothers getting fed up with the world of work and choosing to stay at home? The percentage of women who had jobs, or were looking for them, rose consistently for nearly three decades, but that growth

has faltered in recent years, particularly among younger women. Trend spotters in the news media have begun to rumble about what *Barron's* calls "a quiet counterrevolution." The facts, declares Hayghe, an economist at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, tell a different story.

Although the percentage of women 16 and older in the work force fell by a fraction after 1990, it rebounded in 1992. Last year, 57.9 percent of all women were in the work force, a half-point increase over 1990. Among teenagers, however, there was a pronounced drop, from a high of 53.9 percent in 1989 to 49.9 percent last year. Among women aged 20 to 24, meanwhile, there was also a notable decline, from a high of 73.0 percent in the labor force in 1987 to 71.3 percent last year. Where did the "missing" girls and young women go? Probably to school, Hayghe believes.

If women in significant numbers were returning to the traditional wife-and-homemaker role, Hayghe points out, there should be more "traditional" one-earner families and fewer "dual-earner" ones. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, the dual-earner family in 1992, at 69.8 percent of all two-parent families, was about as common as it had been five years earlier, and the proportion of traditional male-breadwinner families had shrunk—from 26.6 percent in 1987 to 25.4 percent in 1992. What did increase during that period (from 3.9 percent to 4.8 percent of two-parent families), the economist notes, was the proportion of families in which the father was not a breadwinner at all. Hardly a sign of a conservative counterrevolution.

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## SOCIETY

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### *High-Fidelity America*

"Marital Infidelity" by Andrew Greeley, in *Society* (May-June 1994), Rutgers-The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

If such fountains of scholarship as Alfred Kinsey's famous "reports," *Cosmopolitan*, and

Shere Hite's *Hite Report* (1987) are to be believed, there's a whole lot of cheating going on in America. In his 1948 and 1953 tomes, Kinsey said that about half the men in his samples, and a quarter of the women, had committed adultery. More recently, *Cosmopolitan* and Hite came up with even higher figures: Just over half of married women and 72 percent of mar-

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ried men supposedly had done some running around. The apparent truth of the matter is far less lurid, contends Greeley, a University of Chicago sociologist, as well as a Catholic priest and best-selling novelist.

None of the statistics branched by Kinsey and the pop authorities who followed him were based on a carefully designed, random survey of a cross section of Americans. These "experts" interviewed only selected—and in some cases, self-selected—groups of people willing to talk about their intimate lives. "These 'reports' are to responsible social science what alchemy is to chemistry . . . and magic to medicine," Greeley says.

The findings turned up in 1991 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), at the University of Chicago, are quite different. The 1,212 respondents gave their answers by "secret ballot," returned to the interviewer in a sealed envelope. The results: Only 11 percent of the women and 21 percent of the men said that while married, they had engaged in sex with someone other than their spouse. (The higher rate for men may simply reflect greater opportunity, Greeley notes. Among working women and men who have never paid for sex, the adultery rate was the same: 15 percent.) Overall, nearly six out of seven married Americans are faithful to their spouses.

Americans, it seems, may be more wedded to the Seventh Commandment than many think. Even among those in the NORC survey who maintained that adultery is not always wrong, 65 percent still said that they themselves had not engaged in it.

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## *The New National Pastime*

Take me out to the ballgame? Forget it, writes Gerri Hirshey of the *New York Times Magazine* (July 17, 1994).

*Gambling is now bigger than baseball, more powerful than a platoon of Schwarzeneggers, Spielbergs, Madonnas, and Oprahs. More Americans went to casinos than to major league ballparks in 1993. Ninety-two million visits! Legal gambling revenues reached \$30 billion, which is more than the combined take for movies, books, recorded music and park and arcade attractions. Thirty-seven states have lotteries; 23 have sanctioned casinos. More than 60 Indian tribes have gaming compacts with 19 states. As this century turns, it's expected that virtually all Americans will live within a four-hour drive of a casino. . . .*

*And so we stand in lottery lines and climb aboard buses on the strength of possibilities. They're limitless, but with absurdist odds. America has come to count heavily on our cheerful folly. Our modest stakes have become the last best hope for budget-strapped state legislatures, for long-impooverished Indian tribes now permitted to run gaming ventures, for stockbrokers and investment bankers looking to salve the wounds inflicted by '80s excesses. To these grateful constituencies, gambling is no longer a sin, but a saving grace. It can vanquish the ugly specter of raising taxes and shake cash into shambling infrastructures, Head Start programs, fire brigades, tribal medical clinics. It can fatten portfolios with new high-performance issues.*

*On the strength of such boons, Mammon's had a makeover. Much has been made of the new PG Las Vegas, of the theme park hotels, the troops of Dorothys and Totos, buccaneers, knights and hunks in minitogas who now cavort where made guys and hookers once ruled. . . .*

*It's O.K. now, say the attitudinal seismologists. According to a national survey conducted by Harrah's, a top-tier casino company, 51 percent of American adults believe "casino entertainment" is "acceptable for anyone." Another 35 percent say it is "acceptable for others, but not for me." Even "gambling," the term that once conjured up green visors, cigar smoke and gumball-size pinky rings, has been buffed with warm fuzzies. We call it gaming these days. So Aspen. So Hyannisport. So very . . . sportif.*

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## *Prudes and Puritans*

"'Puritanism' as Epithet: Common Standards and the Fate of Reticence" by Rochelle Gurstein, in *Salmagundi* (Winter-Spring 1994), Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 12866.

*Puritan* is an epithet that sophisticates who regard a photograph of a crucifix submerged in

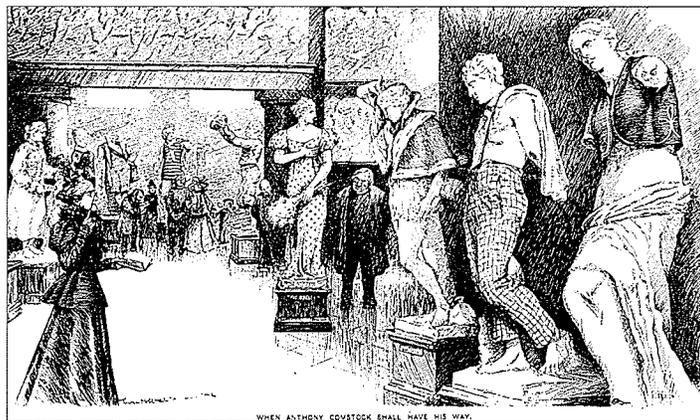
urine as art worthy of federal subsidy apply to those who disagree. In mundane fact, writes Gurstein, a historian at New York University, it is pretty hard to find an influential "Puritan" in late-20th-century America. Even Senator Jesse Helms (R.-N.C.) seeks only to ban government subsidies for works such as the infamous *Piss Christ*, not the works themselves. Nor is there any difficulty, in this land supposedly under the puritanical shadow, in finding Robert Mapplethorpe's shocking photographs of sexual violence at the local bookstore. The long-running struggle between the avant-garde and the so-called puritans has become a farce, Gurstein contends, and in some ways, it always was.

Puritanism as an epithet, Gurstein writes, first appeared in the early decades of the 20th century, "when an angry generation of feminists, birth-control champions, anarchists, free-speech lawyers, cultural critics, realist novelists, and Greenwich Village bohemians attacked their forebears for willfully evading what they considered to be the most pressing issue of life—sex." (They did not know or care that, as historian Perry Miller and others have since shown, the flesh-and-blood Puritans of colonial New England were not, in fact, dour people opposed to anything that smacked of pleasure.) Reformers such as birth-control

advocate Margaret Sanger created a refrain that would be "repeated with tedious regularity by later advocates of exposure both in social reform and the arts," Gurstein says. "Its foundation was a belief in history as a long march of progress led by courageous individuals who were always before their time," the heroic avant-garde. Conveniently stepping into the role of chief villain was Anthony Comstock, the late-19th-century anticezealot who came to symbolize "the Puritan as censor, prurient prude, neurotic, and fool." Literary critic H. L. Mencken joined the crusade against Comstockery, and by the time the

dazzling verbalist was through, "the mere mention of Puritanism would be enough to instantly vanquish one's opponent."

Overlooked, or even conflated with "Puritan" Comstock's "impolite and evangelical form of moralism," was a competing and "more representative" late-19th-century sensibility, Gurstein says. This sensibility—as exemplified, for instance, by Charles Eliot Norton, a Harvard lecturer and man of letters—was not prudish or censorious but *reticent*, reflecting a keen sensitivity toward the feelings of others. "Courtesy, politeness, civility, decency, honor, refinement, cultivation, grace, and elegance were essential components of the reticent sensibility," Gurstein says—and the only thing it had in common with Comstockery was the view that private matters should be kept private. Some things,



*Advanced opinion, as expressed in this 1897 cartoon mocking Comstockery, keeps fighting the same battle today—despite the absence of Comstocks.*

such as sexual intimacy, were considered "so personal, fragile, or vulnerable that they required the cover of privacy if they were to retain their significance and emotional vibrancy." Brought into the public sphere, such matters "were liable to become obscene" and to coarsen and degrade the common life.

The condition of American public life today seems to bear that out, Gurstein says. With the struggles for free expression and birth control long since won, it is high time, she believes, to call off the phony war on puritanism and to bring back something of the 19th century's "reticent sensibility."

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## The Uses of Culture

"The Culture of Culture" by Christopher Clausen, in *The New Leader* (June 6-20, 1994), 275 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001.

Christopher Clausen, a columnist for the *New Leader*, has discovered a cultural phenomenon that deserves some attention: the widespread and indiscriminate use of the term *culture*. Not only has a perfectly fine term been transformed into a buzzword, he observes, but it has been made to buzz for contradictory ends.

In an increasingly fragmented America, culture—in its familiar meaning of a community's way of life—has been stretched further and further, and sometimes beyond the breaking point. A *New York Times* reporter refers to the "the male-dominated culture" of the Pentagon, while a book reviewer complains about "the cultural demand for heterosexuality"; a *New Yorker* writer concerns himself with Russia's putative need for "a new economic culture . . . a culture of dealing with money"; and *GQ* declares that "the culture of boogie . . . makes opera a special art form."

For academics in the humanities and social sciences, Clausen says, the term performs important ideological functions. Culture is thought of as an all-powerful yet infinitely malleable force. Because culture can be changed, so can society. In women's studies departments, for example, all differences between men and women are assumed to be "culturally determined," and thus subject to change. Heterosexuality is likewise regarded as a mere prejudice, a "cultural demand."

But, illogically, *culture* can also be "a rhetorical device" to ward off criticism and change, Clausen points out, a kind of intellectual stop sign. Political correctness rules out virtually any negative comment about any aspect of non-Western or minority "culture." At the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, China and other Asian dictatorships dismissed Western complaints about human rights violations as mere cultural imperialism. However, the fact that even American multiculturalists object to the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia or to female circumcision in sub-Saharan Africa suggests to

Clausen that "culture" is not quite so sacrosanct as some pretend. No one really believes, he says, "that every 'culture' and all of its expressions should be equally respected." That may be, but the word still makes a dandy flogging stick.

## The Geography Of Ghetto Poverty

"Ghetto Poverty among Blacks in the 1980s" by Paul A. Jargowsky, in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (Spring 1994), John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10158.

Like whites before them, many middle-class and working-class black families have been able to escape in recent times from poor inner-city neighborhoods. But their progress has had a price: the increasing isolation of the black poor left behind in destitute and crime-ridden urban ghettos.

In the vast majority of metropolitan areas, writes Jargowsky, a professor of political economy at the University of Texas at Dallas, the number of census tracts with a black poverty rate of 40 percent or higher increased during the 1980s. His conclusions are based on an extensive analysis of 1990 census data. "Greater and greater areas of many central cities are essentially being abandoned," he says. This has happened even though black poverty, at 29.3 percent of black families in 1990, was hardly changed after a decade.

Poor blacks became increasingly concentrated in ghettos during the 1980s: 45.4 percent of them lived in high-poverty tracts in 1990, compared with 37.2 percent 10 years before. Overall, the proportion of the total black population living in such areas increased from 20.2 percent in 1980 to 23.7 percent in 1990. Nearly six million blacks lived in ghettos in 1990; about half of them were poor.

Most large metropolitan areas reflected this national trend. Yet even in some areas where the concentration of blacks in ghettos fell, the number of poverty tracts grew. In the Philadelphia area, only 17.7 percent of blacks were stuck in ghettos by 1990, down from 23.6 per-

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cent, yet the region's ghettos grew by nine tracts.

Still, Jargowsky takes encouragement from declining concentrations in such areas as New York City, Newark, N.J., and Tampa-St. Petersburg. The drops are the product of improved local economies, Jargowsky believes, and show that the vision of the black poor as totally alienated and indifferent to opportunity is wrong. If the economy is strong, many poor people will work their way out of the ghettos.

## ***A University's Decline and Fall***

"Downward Mobility: The Failure of Open Admissions at City University" by Heather Mac Donald, in *City Journal* (Summer 1994), Manhattan Inst., 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

To generations of talented New York City high school graduates, including many from poor and immigrant families, City College once was known as the "Harvard of the poor." It offered an excellent education, free of tuition. Hunter College, Brooklyn College, and Queens College did the same. But that excellence is gone, laments Mac Donald, a *City Journal* contributing editor. Ever since the City University of New York (CUNY) embraced "open admissions" 25 years ago, its four-year senior colleges have been on a steep downhill slide. Today, only about 25 percent of its students graduate within eight years, and many who do lack even basic skills.

CUNY dropped entrance requirements at its 10 senior colleges after a violent student strike in 1969 protesting "racism" and "elitism"—even though it had seven community colleges effectively open to all city students with a high school diploma.

The open admissions policy cost \$35.5 million in its first year. "Within months, City College alone created 105 sections of remedial English and hired 21 full-time faculty members to teach them," Mac Donald writes. Nearly nine in 10 of its students required remedial writing instruction. "Professors found themselves facing students who had never

read a book, some of whom had no experience with written language or standard English." Although the initial graduation rates of students in SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge), the central remedial program, were only around 15 percent within eight years, the university did not reconsider the program but instead expanded it. "Today, its resources dwarf those of traditional academic departments," reports Mac Donald, but the graduation rate for SEEK students is no better.

There are still good students and good programs at the CUNY colleges, Mac Donald notes, "but it is harder and harder for those students to get the education they deserve, because CUNY's remedial functions are swallowing up all others." Open admissions has hurt some colleges, notably Queens, less than others, she points out. And many CUNY graduate programs retain good reputations.

Proponents of open admissions originally promised that the remedial students would be brought up to the colleges' high academic standards, Mac Donald writes. Instead, standards have been lowered. The original idea of keeping remedial students out of regular courses until they acquired college-level skills was soon decried as "stigmatizing" and abandoned. Now, the distinction between the two types of courses has been blurred.

Bad as things are, Mac Donald fears that they may get worse. "A new generation of writing teachers, forcefully represented in CUNY's English and SEEK departments, is arguing that [academic] 'deficiency' and 'remediation' are mere 'social constructs' designed to marginalize unwanted groups of people." If these teachers have their way, academic standards will be completely abandoned and replaced by the notion of "competence in one's own culture."

Mac Donald thinks it is time to scrap the whole experiment and go back to the colleges' original purpose: giving an excellent education to poor and working-class students who are prepared to benefit from it. The money saved could be used to help their less qualified peers in other ways. As things stand now, both groups are being cheated.

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## PRESS & MEDIA

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### *How CNN Hurt Journalism*

"The Myth of CNN" by Tom Rosenstiel, in *The New Republic* (Aug. 22 & 29, 1994), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

When the first U.S. bombs and missiles slammed into Iraq in January 1991 to begin the Persian Gulf War, three Cable News Network (CNN) correspondents, holed up in their

Baghdad hotel room, provided an exclusive—and riveting—description of the attack. As the hours went by, some 11.5 million homes tuned in to the channel once ridiculed as the "Chicken Noodle Network." Saddam Hussein's government had allowed only CNN to have its own dedicated phone line. ABC, NBC, and CBS just could not match their upstart rival's performance. The novelty soon wore off, however. Before the brief war was

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### *Nixon's Final Crisis*

Journalist David Halberstam suggests in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (July–Aug. 1994) that former president Richard M. Nixon's campaign to rehabilitate himself, in part through the shrewd use of television, did not end with his death.

*Anyone watching and listening to the television coverage of his final days, from his death to his funeral, had to be impressed by the success of his effort. The coverage seemed to be not merely scripted, but indeed edited by Nixon himself—I almost thought I might see his name on the final credits: Executive Producer, Richard M. Nixon. . . .*

*He used the immediate circumstances of his death exceptionally well. The death of a head of state and the subsequent state funeral are hardly the optimum time for journalists to dredge up old controversies; it is a time to mourn and to remember, and the doubts of even the best reporters who are called on to comment are, by the very nature of the event, muted. One tends to speak well of the dead anyway, and Nixon understood that. He understood as well that network television people rise to all ceremonial occasions, and if they do not cover American politics very well, they do cover ceremonies well,*

*and among their favorite ceremonies are funerals. . . .*

*In addition, I am sure Nixon understood something else about network television: that at such moments there is an unconscious institutional instinct on the part of network journalists—the higher they are, the more concerned they are, like politicians, about losing their own popularity—to be concerned more than anything else about positioning themselves. One can assume, then, that the essential inner equation of ranking network journalists during these days was something like this: The more truth I tell, and the closer I come to the complexity of this man, the less welcome*

*I will seem at his funeral (and in the living rooms of America), and the more I will seem to be violating the spirit of it, and the more the ordinary people of the country will resent me rather than the deceased. . . .*

*The portrait given us over the final days of a wise elder statesman who had battled his way back from serious political problems rather than the tense, angry man of significant skills—the Nixon preserved on the tapes: insecure, vindictive, raging at everyone and everything around him—represented Nixon's final triumph over his arch enemy: the media.*



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over, nearly 11 million CNN viewers had switched back to the Big Three broadcast networks. For CNN, it has been downhill ever since. Only with the O. J. Simpson murder case did the network get some transient relief. In the last year alone, CNN viewership has tumbled by 25 percent. By May, only 370,000 TV sets were tuned to the channel at any given time. More people watch ABC or CBS at 3 A.M. than watch the Atlanta-based cable news network during daylight hours.

Rosenstiel, a national correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, sheds no tears for CNN. The network could have revolutionized TV journalism; instead it has only diminished it, he says. Although it broadcasts around the clock, its news shows are not much longer than the 22-minute network broadcasts. Much of CNN's programming is "strangely tired and unimaginative," Rosenstiel complains. Not only that, he says, but CNN has contributed to the "loss of control" by other major news organizations over what they broadcast or print. The result has been a general "rush to sensationalism" and an overemphasis on interpretation of the news instead of old-fashioned newsgathering.

Established by entrepreneur Ted Turner in 1980, CNN soon realized that it could sell its oceans of news footage to hundreds of local

TV news operations. Local affiliates of the Big Three then forced them to share their own previously jealously guarded footage, Rosenstiel says. This put local news directors—many of whom had "far lower standards than their network counterparts," according to Rosenstiel—in a position to call the shots as to what footage got aired and what became "news." When Gennifer Flowers's claim to have had a long affair with candidate Bill Clinton surfaced in a supermarket tabloid during the 1992 presidential campaign, the Big Three news divisions, seeking to verify her claim, decided not to run the story that night, but local affiliates decided otherwise: The story aired.

CNN also has distracted print journalists from their primary job, Rosenstiel contends. After the cable network's Gulf War scoop, newspaper editors made sure to have the 24-hour news network constantly on view in their newsrooms. "Editors who watched CNN all the time started to assume that their readers were watching, too," Rosenstiel says. Believing readers had already absorbed the main news about the Midwest floods of 1993, for example, editors at the *Chicago Tribune* "barely covered" the disaster. Falling for the "myth of CNN," Rosenstiel says, editors are giving up hard news for stories based on "analysis" and "attitude"—or, as one detractor puts it, for "soufflé journalism."

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## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

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### *An Islamic Reformation?*

"Islam and the West" by Brian Beedham, in *The Economist* (Aug. 6, 1994), 25 St. James St., London, England SW1A 1HG.

Sooner or later, a clash between Islamic fundamentalism and the West is all but inevitable, some thinkers on both sides warn. And it could be sooner: If the murderous Islamic rebels in Algeria gain power, there may be a domino effect in North Africa—and rancorous political conflict, at least, between Islam and

Europe. But if the worst can be avoided on the southern side of the Mediterranean, the prospects brighten for peaceful coexistence, argues Beedham, a journalist and former foreign affairs editor of the *Economist*. The religious revival now under way in the Muslim world, he believes, could well lead to reformation and democracy, paralleling what happened in the West centuries ago.

It is not the Koran—the word of God as revealed to and transcribed by Mohammed in Arabia 1,400 years ago—that stands in the way of democracy, sexual equality, and a modern

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economy in the Muslim countries, Beedham points out. Rather, it is the exclusive power that a small group of men—the scholars of Islam, the ulema—possesses to interpret the Koran. “The Koran may be the voice of God, but only about 80 of its 6,000 verses lay down rules of public law, and not many of those 80 have obvious application to today’s world. Interpretation is needed,” Beedham writes.

Most popular discontent in the Muslim world today is directed at corrupt politicians, and many religious leaders have discredited themselves by backing the strongmen. In the

eyes of “radicals longing to revive the old vigor of Islam,” much of the clerical establishment is “weary, compromised, and contemptible.”

Most Muslims still are willing to leave *ijtihad* (interpretation) of the Koran to the scholars—but slowly, Beedham believes, that may be changing. Already, a number of “forward-looking Muslims,” such as Abdullahi An-Naim, a Sudanese lawyer who spoke at a recent seminar in Kuala Lumpur, are making the case that Muslims must start thinking of *ijtihad* as a function of the whole people, not the special right of a scholastic elite. Beedham hears echoes of the 16th-century Prot-

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### *The Return of Natural Law*

Ordinarily, it should not be left to judges to say what natural law requires, the late Russell Kirk, author of *The Conservative Mind* (1953), argues in *Policy Review* (Summer 1994). Natural law is “derived from divine commandment; from the nature of humankind; from abstract Reason; or from long experience of mankind in community.”

*Not since Associate Justice Joseph Story adorned the Supreme Court of the United States, early in the 19th century, has any member of the Supreme Court had much to say about natural law. Nevertheless, in recent decades a number of Supreme Court decisions seem to have been founded upon natural-law notions of a sort. I think, for instance, of the Warren Court’s decision (the opinion written by Chief Justice Warren himself) that congressional districts within the several states must be so drawn in their boundaries as to contain so nearly as possible the same number of persons within the several districts—a matter previously left to the discretion of state legislatures. . . .*

*As [Orestes] Brownson remarks, the natural law (or law of God) and the American civil law are not ordinarily at swords’ points. Large elements of natural law entered into the common law of England—and therefore into the common law of the United States—over the centuries; and the Roman law, so eminent in the science of jurisprudence, expresses the natural law enunciated by the Roman juriconsults. No civilization ever has attempted to maintain the bed of justice by direct application of natural-law doctrines by magistrates; necessar-*

*ily, it is by edict, rescript, and statute that any state keeps the peace through a system of courts. It simply will not do to maintain that private interpretation of natural law should be the means by which conflicting claims are settled.*

*Rather, natural law ought to help form the judgments of the persons who are lawmakers. . . . The civil law should be shaped in conformity to the natural law—which originated, in Cicero’s words, “before any written law existed or any state had been established.”*

*It does not follow that judges should be permitted to push aside the Constitution, or statutory laws, in order to substitute their private interpretations of what the law of nature declares. To give the judiciary such power would be to establish what might be called an archonocracy, a domination of judges, supplanting the constitutional republic; also it surely would produce some curious and unsettling decisions, sweeping away precedent, which would be found highly distressing by friends to classical and Christian natural law. . . . Left to their several private judgments of what is “natural,” some judges indubitably would do mischief to the person and the republic.*

estant reformers in these ideas.

"For the enthusiasts of Islamic revivalism," Beedham notes, "as for men like John Wycliffe and Jan Hus in the years before the start of the Reformation, going back to the roots means a return to the presumed simplicities of the early days of the religion, a new embrace of the religion's first writings." Just as a multitude of sects came into being during the pre-Reformation period in Europe, so the Islamic revival has produced a large number of more-or-less autonomous groups devoted to good works (health clinics, canteens, basic schooling) in the slum-suburbs of the big Muslim cities.

Beedham sees further parallels. In the early 16th century, gold and silver imported from the New World had a destabilizing effect on Europe's economy, but the new riches offered the possibility of long-term prosperity; massive purchases of Arab oil by the industrialized world are having a similar impact in Muslim countries. Finally, just as cultural intercourse with the Arab empire long ago renewed Europe's connection with its intellectual roots in classical Greece, so today the flow of Western culture and technology into the Islamic world may foster great intellectual change. And it may not take as long to happen. New ideas now travel

faster, Beedham observes, "and the people of today's Muslim countries are on the whole much readier to absorb" them than were the pre-Reformation Europeans.

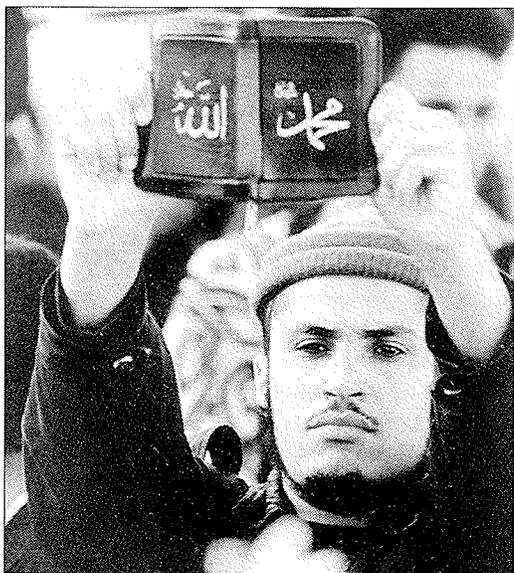
## *The Strength Of Strictness*

"Why Strict Churches Are Strong" by Laurence R. Iannaccone, in *American Journal of Sociology* (Mar. 1994), 5835 S. Kimbark, Chicago, Ill. 60637.

While membership in virtually all of the "mainline" Protestant churches has declined during the last three decades, the ranks of Mormons, Pentecostals, and other more conservative denominations have rapidly expanded. Iannaccone, an economist at California's Santa Clara University, claims that their secret is in their strictness.

"Strict churches proclaim an exclusive truth—a closed, comprehensive, and eternal doctrine," he notes. "They demand adherence to a distinctive faith, morality, and lifestyle. They condemn deviance, shun dissenters, and repudiate the outside world. They frequently embrace 'eccentric traits,' such as distinctive diet, dress, or speech, that invite ridicule, isolation, and persecution." Mormons abstain from alcohol and caffeine, Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions, and Seventh-Day Adventists avoid eating meat. Why, the economist asks, would a rational person not turn to one of the less demanding faiths in the religious marketplace?

The answer, he argues (leaving theological questions aside), is that the strictness serves a rational purpose: It screens out "lukewarm" adherents. They are what economists call "free riders," who take more than they give. "Church members may attend services, call upon the pastor for counsel, enjoy the fellowship of their peers, and so forth, without ever putting a dollar in the plate or bringing a dish to the potluck [supper]." Their presence in the congregation reduces the collective levels of participation and enthusiasm. "One need not look far," Iannaccone says, "to find an anemic congregation plagued by free-rider problems—a visit to the nearest lib-



*Are Islamic rebels on the march to power in Algeria?*

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eral, mainline Protestant church usually will suffice." By getting rid of the free riders, the strict churches become stronger—and more attractive. "Strictness works," Iannaccone declares.

It can be carried too far, however. "Even though hundreds were willing to join the Bhagwan Rajneesh in Antelope, Oregon, few would have followed him to the Arctic Circle,"

Iannaccone says. Many small sects wither and die because they impose excessive demands. A 1985 study of more than 400 sects found that 32 percent never increased their membership from what it was on the day they were launched; only six percent grew rapidly. For a strict sect or church to thrive, Iannaccone concludes, it has to know when to relax its strictures a bit.

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## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

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### Will the Endangered Species Act Survive?

*A Survey of Recent Articles*

Last June, an American bald eagle, found months earlier with a broken wing and nursed back to health, was set free in Maryland near the Chesapeake Bay. As the majestic creature soared into the sky, it carried even more than the species' usual symbolic weight: The bird had been given the name "Hope," and its release was timed to coincide with an announcement by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that the American bald eagle—that venerated emblem of the nation—was no longer "endangered," merely "threatened." In 1974, there were only 791 known nesting pairs of bald eagles in the continental United States, but now, 20 years later, there are about 4,000. Credit was given to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, which protects animal and plant species at risk of extinction and their "critical habitats." The controversial law, the Fish and Wildlife Service wanted it understood, had worked.

In fact, however, it appears that the ESA—which is now up for reauthorization in Congress—has not been very effective. In an evaluation in *Science* (Nov. 12, 1993), Timothy H. Tear and Patricia H. Hayward of the University of Idaho's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Resources, along with two colleagues from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, J. Michael Scott and Brad Griffith, write: "Few [endangered] species have actually recovered because of the ESA." Even the bald eagle may not owe its sur-

vival to the ESA. Thomas Lambert and Robert J. Smith, in the Center for the Study of American Business's *Policy Study No. 119* (March 1994), contend that it was not the ESA but the 1972 ban on DDT, a pesticide thought by scientists to interfere with the eagle's reproductive capacity, that saved the bird.

There is no question that the ESA, along with earlier laws, has fallen far short in its rescue mission. Of the 1,354 species (822 native to the United States) listed as endangered or threatened since 1966, only 19 have been removed from the list, including eight that were listed in error and seven that became extinct. The four apparent success stories were a plant found in Utah and three birds native to an island in the western Pacific. A 1990 General Accounting Office (GAO) report found that more than 80 percent of the listed endangered species were still declining. A 1992 GAO report found that federal authorities had managed to designate "critical habitats" for only 105, or 16 percent, of 651 listed species.

Recovery plans are supposed to be made for each of the threatened or endangered species; about 400 such plans have been drawn up. Examining those available in 1991, the *Science* authors found that 28 percent of the species for which population data could be obtained "had recovery goals set at or below the existing population size at the time the plan was written." The original recovery plan for the endangered Cali-

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fornia condor, for example, estimated there were 60 birds in the wild—and set a population of 50 birds as the target for recovery. The *Science* authors surmise “that political, social, or economic considerations” might have been involved in the determinations.

Proponents of the law argue that enforcement has been inadequate. Nancy Kubasek, a professor of legal studies at Bowling Green State University, and two colleagues, writing in an 820-page issue of *Environmental Law* (April 1994) devoted to the subject, assert that the \$30–40 million that Congress annually allotted to administer the endangered species program during the Bush years “clearly” was not enough. In the same issue, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt contends that there has been a “willful failure” on the part of the public officials charged with administering the law. The ESA itself, he says, is “an extraordinary piece of legislation” and “is not the problem.”

Critics, however, insist that the ESA is the problem. Writing in *Policy Review* (Winter 1994), Robert Gordon and James Streeter of the National Wilderness Institute claim that while the law has failed utterly to accomplish its purpose, it has taken “an ever-mounting toll on individuals, society, and the economy.” The much-publicized controversy over restrictions on the Pacific Northwest timber industry designed to save the northern spotted owl is only one example of the way in which endangered-species protection and economic interests can clash. Numerous “horror stories” pointing up the conflict are cited by Gordon and Streeter and by the Center for the Study of American Business’s Lambert and Smith. Not all the stories are well founded, however. For instance, Lambert and Smith assert that if homeowners in Riverside County, California, had not been prohibited by the ESA from “disking” their land, home to the endangered Stephen’s kangaroo rat, to remove vegetation and create firebreaks, many of the 29 homes destroyed by a wildfire there in October 1993 could have been saved. But the GAO, in *Endangered Species Act: Impact of Species Protection Efforts on the 1993 California Fire* (July 1994), reports that it could find no evidence to support that view: “Homes where weed abatement, including disking, had

been performed were destroyed, while other homes in the same general area survived even though no evidence of weed abatement was present.”

The overall economic impact of the ESA has been limited, argues MIT political scientist and ESA enthusiast Stephen M. Meyer in the *New Republic* (Aug. 15, 1994): “While listing an animal as endangered may reduce the short-term profitability of a construction project or a local industry, the effects are of neither sufficient size nor duration to harm state economic performance, let alone the national economy.” That, of course, is small comfort to the people involved in the construction project or the local industry.

“The ESA, with its focus on habitat,” Secretary Babbitt acknowledges, “undeniably limits the freedom of some landowners: Freedom to raze a forest, to bulldoze habitat, or to dry up streams which contain an endangered species. The questions then become: How far? What are the restrictions like? When are you entitled to compensation?”

Since species preservation is a public good, the public should pay for it, Lambert and Smith contend: “The federal government should be required to pay for lost economic value of lands set aside to preserve habitat.” By the same logic, Babbitt counters, chemical companies that incur losses because of a federal ban on cancer-causing pesticides should be compensated by the government. That, he says, would violate the maxim that the polluter pays.

**T**he fundamental question may be this: What interests, or obligations, do we have in the preservation of endangered species? Robert Meltz, an attorney with the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, points out in *Environmental Law* that although “property rights are well analyzed in our legal and moral tradition, our legal and ethical duties to endangered species are novel and not universally accepted. Forgoing development of private land that might harm a public drinking water source is a sacrifice most landowners might accept; having one’s livelihood disrupted to preserve an endangered bird is a tougher call.” And that is one reason the ESA is in for a tough time in Congress.

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## The Cold Fusion Phoenix

"Warming Up to Cold Fusion" by Edmund Storms, in *Technology Review* (May-June 1994), P.O. Box 489, Mount Morris, Ill. 61054.

Five years ago, chemists Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann announced to a startled world that they had achieved a miracle of physics. In a simple table-top nuclear device operated at room temperature, they claimed, they had generated more energy than they had used. As excited media reports around the world noted, cold nuclear fusion held the promise of producing virtually limitless energy. When dozens of labs tried without success to duplicate the two chemists' astonishing experiment, however, scientists and the general public quickly turned skeptical. "Cold fusion" was widely dismissed as a delusion, and perhaps even a fraud.

Storms, a chemist recently retired from the Los Alamos National Laboratory, contends that the conventional wisdom about cold fusion is wrong. The early attempts to reproduce the experiment were marred by imperfect conditions, materials, or equipment, and by misinterpretations. Enough reputable researchers since then have published findings, resulting from a sufficiently broad range of experimental approaches, Storms says, to make it hard to doubt "that something is going on outside the explanations offered by conventional physics."

In Pons and Fleischmann's experiment, which was carried out at the University of Utah, electricity was applied to a strip of palladium surrounded by a coil of platinum wire and immersed in a container of "heavy water" (i.e. water in which deuterium takes the place of ordinary hydrogen). As the deuterium builds up in the palladium, "it supposedly undergoes the fusion reaction" and the metal heats up. Not only Pons and Fleischmann, working in France with support from a Japanese firm, but other reputable scientists have since reported producing heat in excess of the electrical input. "Dozens of examples reporting such excess energy have now been published," Storms says. In some cases, the excess energy has been "thousands of times larger than any known chemical (that is, non-nuclear) reaction could produce."

The excess heat generated is not the only evi-

dence for cold fusion, Storms observes. Many experiments have also produced tritium and helium, both elements "known to be produced only by nuclear reactions."

Although the experimental results conflict with accepted theory, Storms says, they "strongly support the conclusion that a new class of phenomena, which I call chemically assisted nuclear reactions, has been discovered." The discovery's ultimate practical worth remains to be seen. But he urges scientists to keep their minds open.

## Medical Sexism?

"The Sex-Bias Myth in Medicine" by Andrew G. Kadar, M.D., in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Aug. 1994), 745 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

When it comes to health care, women have been treated as second-class citizens. So President Bill Clinton has asserted and women's-health advocates have insisted. Kadar, an anesthesiologist at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, agrees that there is a "medical gender gap," but, he contends, it favors women, not men.

American women, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services surveys show, seek and receive more medical care than men do (even if pregnancy-related care is excluded), and they spend two out of every three health-care dollars. That's not all. Kadar rebuts several oft-made claims:

- *A study conducted at the University of California at San Diego in 1979 found that men's complaints of back and chest pain, dizziness, fatigue, and headache more often resulted in extensive diagnostic workups than did similar complaints from women. The study is constantly cited as proof that "sex-biased" doctors take women's complaints less seriously than men's.* Not quite, says Kadar. That small-scale regional survey used the charts of only 104 men and women (52 married couples). It prompted a far more extensive national review of 46,868 office visits. The results, reported in 1981 but generally overlooked today, showed that the care received by men and women was similar about two-thirds of the time. "When the care was different, women overall received more diagnostic tests and treatment—more lab tests, blood-pressure checks, drug prescriptions, and return appointments," Kadar says.

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• *Women's illnesses receive less attention from researchers than men's do. An inventory by the National Institutes of Health of its total research budget in 1987 found that only 13.5 percent was devoted to studying diseases unique to women. Yes, says Kadar, but only 6.5 percent of the budget was devoted to afflictions unique to men.*

• *Nearly all heart disease research is conducted on men, with the conclusions blindly generalized to women. A five-year Harvard Medical School study of the effects of aspirin on prevention of cardiovascular disease examined thousands of men, but not one woman. False, says Kadar. The Harvard researchers studied both sexes, almost concurrently. "The results of the men's study were reported . . . in July of 1989 and prompted charges of sexism in medical research. The women's-study results were [published] in July of 1991, and were generally ignored by the nonmedical press." The biggest study of cardiovascular health over time began in Framingham, Massachusetts, in 1948. The researchers started with 2,336 men and 2,873 women, and have been tracking the health of the survivors of both sexes ever since.*

• *Breast cancer research has been scandalously neglected. If a tumor devastated men on a similar scale, a national Apollo-style program would be launched to cure it. Not so, says Kadar. Lung cancer heads the list of fatal tumors for both sexes, but research on breast cancer, the second most lethal malignancy in females, gets more funding from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) than lung cancer research or any other tumor research. The second most lethal malignancy in males is also a sex-specific tumor: prostate cancer. Last year about 46,000 women succumbed to breast cancer and 35,000 men to prostate cancer. The NCI spent \$213.7 million on breast cancer research—four times as much as it spent on study of the prostate.*

The net result of the real "medical gender gap," Kadar concludes, is "the most important gap of all": Women live, on average, about seven years longer than men.

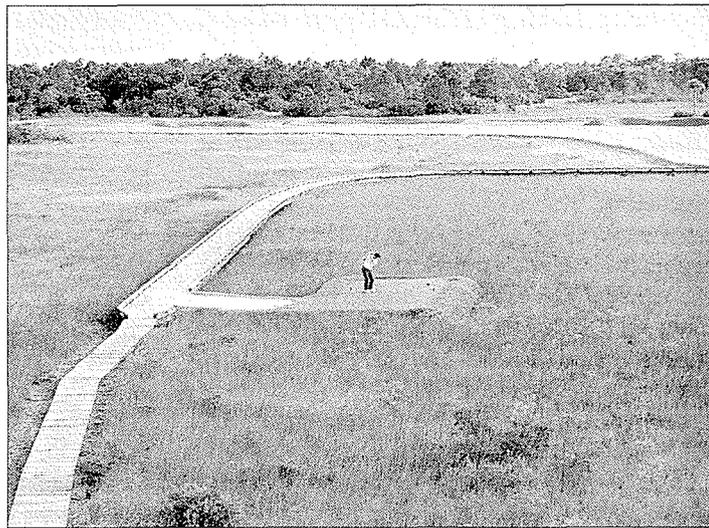
## Of Greens and Putting Greens

"Toxic Green: The Trouble with Golf" by Anne E. Platt, in *WorldWatch* (June 1994), 1776 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Off to the links for a bit of sport amid the splendors of nature this weekend? Think again. The unnatural attractions "displace people, destroy habitats, pollute surrounding water and air with their heavy concentrations of fertilizer and pesticides, and deplete public water supplies," writes Platt, a researcher at the Worldwatch Institute.

Some 25,000 golf courses now dot the globe, covering an area almost the size of Belgium, and the number is increasing rapidly. Golf course construction is the world's fastest growing type of land development. Courses have sprung up throughout Southeast Asia; in Thailand, one is being built every 10 days. In Japan—whose 12 million golf enthusiasts are the sport's big spenders, paying as much as \$250,000 for membership in a country club—golf course development has resulted in the loss of more than 5,000 hectares (12,355 acres) of forest in a single year.

"From Las Vegas to Zimbabwe, golf courses are absorbing more and more of the scarce wa-



*Golfers on this environment-friendly course in West Palm Beach, Florida, can worry about their game without worrying about harming nature.*

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ter supplies in arid regions," Platt writes. In Tampa, Florida, three municipal golf courses consume about 560,000 gallons a day. In the United States, home to more than half of the world's 50 million golfers, about 10 percent of golf courses are now being irrigated with waste water.

Fertilizers and pesticides are another golf course hazard, Platt notes. According to the U.S.-based *Journal of Pesticide Reform*, 750 kilograms (about 1,653 pounds) of pesticides are sprayed on a typical course annually. A 1990 study of 52 courses on Long Island, New York, found that the yearly amount of pesticides applied per acre was about seven times greater than the amount applied to farmland.

The chemicals also pose a threat to human health, Platt says. A 1991 survey of Japanese doctors found that of some 500 patients "with

suspected poisoning from agricultural chemicals, 125 were associated with golf courses, 97 as employees." To prevent such problems, one Japanese company announced plans to build 15 "chemical-free" golf courses in Japan. Members will be asked to help weed the greens and do other chores. Elsewhere, operators have experimented with different varieties of grass and biological-control methods.

Platt suggests a return to the roots of golf. When the game was invented in Scotland in the 15th century, she points out, Scottish links (areas of dunes and grass-covered marshes between land and sea), pastures, and commons were used for the playing surface, and players were challenged to overcome the natural lay of the land. For the environment's sake, perhaps modern golfers should be given the same challenge.

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## ARTS & LETTERS

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### *(Black) Art Is Beautiful*

"The Real Thing" by Garry Wills, in *The New York Review of Books* (Aug. 11, 1994), 250 West 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107.

The superb paintings of Horace Pippin and Jacob Lawrence—now being shown in separate exhibits touring the country—make an important point, notes Wills, the polymathic historian-journalist: "Black art has been created not to a program or racial thesis but by individual genius facing particular choices."

The paintings of Pippin and Lawrence have superficial similarities. Both men preferred small formats, and their subjects were often the same (e.g., John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, black role models, black soldiers). But the mass of their paintings, Wills says, "shows two different sensibilities at work, men of widely differing techniques and tastes, given dramatically different opportunities."

Pippin (1888–1946) was a poorly educated laborer and disabled World War I veteran who had no formal instruction in art and worked in isolation outside Philadelphia. He had little more than a

decade of full-time painting before he died of a stroke, but in that time he created haunting images such as the ambitious *John Brown Going to His Hanging* (1942). His rough, vigorous technique was a consequence of the German sniper's bullet that shattered his shoulder in the Argonne Forest. "Holding his right arm in his left, he painted details with a concentrated force," Wills writes.

Lawrence, who is now 76, was taken by his mother to Harlem to live when he was 13. The precocious teenager haunted the neighborhood's libraries and art galleries, received formal training in art, and "moved in a buzz of artists' talk and activity." In 1937, when he was barely 20, he was at work on a brilliant series of 41 panels devoted to the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture (1746–1803), the Haitian revolutionary. Lawrence's major work has been in such symbolic-narrative sequences, including 32 panels devoted to the life of Frederick Douglass, 31 to Harriet Tubman, and 60 to the great migration of blacks from the South. "With his astonishing facility," Wills writes, "Lawrence composes the whole sequence in pencil sketches, the compositions rhythmically interrelated, meant to be seen as parts of a single artifact, like movements

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## On the Side of Civilization

Joseph Conrad, says essayist Joseph Epstein in the *New Criterion* (June 1994), may be thought of "as Henry James for people who prefer to read about the out-of-doors."

*A Pole who wrote in English, a modernist artist who believed in the most old-fashioned way in duty and honor, Joseph Conrad is the great anomaly of modern, perhaps of all, literature, the exception who proves no rule. In one sense, Conrad's place is in the line begun by Flaubert and ending with Joyce—the international line of the perfectionists and experimentalists. But Conrad is also among the chief moralists of the novel. He preferred to put his characters—and his readers—in situations of ethical bafflement and then watch to discover if their moral compasses will help them find their way home. This, too, was Henry James's modus operandi. Reading both writers provides superior entertainment as well as a strenuous test of one's own equipment for moral navigation. . . .*

*To grasp anything like the full power of Conrad's fiction, one must, I think, at some point in one's life have been impressed with the utter indifference of the universe to even the most grand of human plans. One must have felt the brute fact that we both come into and go out of this world alone—and, however much surrounded by other people, nonetheless spend much time in between in spiritually this same condition*



*of loneliness. However great one's love of justice, one must know that it is not evenly meted out in this world, nor is it ever likely to be. One must understand that good frequently goes without reward while at the same time evil is never justified and always brings its own punishment. Life must be considered a struggle, a battle, a riddle to which it may well be that nothing resembling a persuasive answer is available. . . .*

*For maintaining his views Conrad has been taken, variously, as a pessimist, a moral nihilist, an inept artist, a right-wing reactionary. What he was, as all great writers are, was on the side of civilization. Having lived as he did—practically born into exile, orphaned by politics, exposed to danger at sea and viciousness in strange lands, under siege his lifelong by an unrelenting depression—Conrad had a clearer view than most of the tenuousness of civilization. And yet, he felt, "some kind of belief is very necessary." His own kind of belief was complex, qualified, but nonetheless genuine. "To be hopeful in an artistic sense," Conrad wrote, "it is not necessary to think that the world is good. It is enough to believe that there is no impossibility of its being made so."*

in a long musical development."

By the early 1940s, both Pippin and Lawrence were respected artists, Wills notes. "Yet each one's claims about authentic art were used against the other."

In the wake of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, Pippin's works were praised as "authentic" black art. *Art Digest* lauded his freedom from "the sophisticated 'primitivism' seen so often among school-trained pretenders"—such as Lawrence. But, Wills points out, "Pippin had no specifically black art to draw on as he developed his skills. He

relied on religious engravings, posters, advertisements. The paradox is that this 'primitive' artist knew mainly commercial art." The highly eclectic Lawrence was no more "authentic," Wills adds. He "derived only limited aspects of his style from African-influenced artists" and "tapped sources as diverse as Goya's antiwar etchings and the cartoons of George Grosz."

Neither Pippin nor Lawrence "succeeds or fails by having a 'correct' approach to Negritude," Wills believes. Their work is great "not because it is black art but because it is black art."

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## The Guns of Theory

"The Assault on the Canon" by Peter Shaw, in *The Sewanee Review* (Spring 1994), University of the South, Sewanee, Tenn. 37383.

It is more than passing strange: The academics who so strenuously object to the "canon" of the great works of Western literature never get down to cases. "Canon-busters" such as Barbara Foley, author of *Radical Representations* (1993) and Paul Lauter, author of *Canons and Context* (1991), do not challenge the standing of *Hamlet*, say, or any other particular revered work. Instead, they train their guns on the process by which the canon is formed, or on the very idea of a canon. Their assault is a *theoretical* one, Shaw, author of *The War against Intellect* (1989), argues—and defenders of the canon, instead of just singing the praises of the masterpieces, would do well to point out the theory's fatal defects.

The logic of the canon assault, Shaw says, rests on the theory of "contingencies of value," as spelled out in Barbara Herrnstein Smith's 1988 book by that name. Traditionalists contend that the canon is composed of works that have stood the test of time. Smith, however, insists that that test "is not . . . an impersonal and impartial mechanism." Biases ("contingencies") *increase* over time, as the ruling class, operating through "cultural institutions," sifts through the literature to find the works that "appear to reflect and reinforce establishment ideologies."

For that to be true, however, Shaw says, "the canon would have to be loaded with second-rate works that happen to reflect 'establishment' ide-

ology." Smith never identifies even one such work. The few attempts others have made to demonstrate her thesis—such as Lawrence H. Schwartz's *Creating Faulkner's Reputation: The Politics of Modern Literary Criticism* (1988)—only serve to reveal its poverty, Shaw asserts. Schwartz (who does not question Faulkner's greatness) claims that the revival of the novelist's reputation during the late 1940s was the result of the Cold War and of postwar American chauvinism. But, Shaw points out, the Faulkner revival began during the late 1930s and "was prominently led by Europeans."

The establishment's power to affect the canon is much exaggerated, Shaw notes. When T. S. Eliot, for example, "tried to lend his immense prestige to elevating the poetry of Rudyard Kipling," he failed utterly.

To Shaw, the notion that the canon somehow shores up the powers that be is ludicrous: "Not only do the canonical works not advance the interests of ruling classes at all, but they also do not primarily serve the stability of the social order." Indeed, they are, in general, works of social and cultural *opposition*. "From the resistance to settled order of Sophocles' *Antigone* and Job in the Bible, to the apostasies of Galileo, Diderot, Voltaire, William Blake, Goethe, and Nietzsche, the canon is a hotbed of heterodoxy." Indeed, defenders of the canon themselves are continually at war over who belongs on it. In fact, Shaw notes, the *only* people who are not busy arguing the merits and demerits of particular works are the canon-busters. They remain above the fray—theoretically.

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## OTHER NATIONS

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### Red Star Rising?

"How the East Was Lost" by Adrian Karatnycky, in *National Review* (June 27, 1994), 150 East 35th St., New York, N.Y. 10016.

Three years ago, AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland met with Sándor Nagy, the leader of what had been Hungary's official state-con-

trolled communist trade union. Nagy told him: "There are three major currents in Hungary today—the Christian Democrats, the liberals, and the Social Democrats." Kirkland, a veteran in the fight against totalitarianism, replied: "Mr. Nagy, tell me: What happened to all the Communists?" The Hungarian turned crimson. Now, after the decisive victory of ex-

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Communists in last May's elections, Nagy and his comrades "are back near the levers of power," notes Karatnycky, executive director of Freedom House. Their political comeback, he adds, is part of a startling regional trend: Former Communists hold power, or significantly share in it, in all but five of the 22 states in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. (Albania, Armenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Latvia are the exceptions.)

Economic difficulties are not the only cause of the comeback, Karatnycky contends. The hardships involved in the transition to a market economy—aggravated by the European Union's denial of market access to East European nations—were certain to push millions of disgruntled workers and pensioners to the left, he notes. But why did they turn to the *ex-communist* Left and not to the new social-democratic parties that emerged from the anti-communist opposition?

A dispirited populace and a tenacious communist *nomenklatura* helped to make the comeback possible, but the biggest factor, Karatnycky argues, was that "anti-communists lost their moral voice. As soon as the communist system collapsed in Central and Eastern Europe, democratic ideas took the back seat. Aid from the West was directed away from building democracy, strengthening the independent media, and re-creating spiritual values, and directed instead toward rapid economic restructuring." Finance ministers, assisted by international technocrats, moved to center stage, supplanting the leaders of the democratic movements.

"The cultural struggle that should have been waged against the evil communist past was jettisoned—at the very time it was needed most," Karatnycky asserts. "Detached, pragmatic Eurocrats and Beltway Bandits recoiled at such unifying, inspiring forces as nationalism and religious revival, which had been central to the collapse of the Soviet system and are central to the fragile rebirth of civil society, community, and a sense of purpose. Instead, nationalism was equated with xenophobia and ethnic hatred. . . .

"Even as the values of human rights, democracy, and dignity so central to the decades-long anti-communist struggle were replaced by a

soulless technocratic jargon, most Western advisers were also urging the new leaders to dispense with any moral accounting of their predecessors' regimes and get on with more practical matters," Karatnycky notes. When material progress was not soon forthcoming, the door was left open for the ex-Communists' return. They cannot easily go back to their old ways, Karatnycky admits, but their comeback shows the urgent need for the West again to stress democratic ideas and values, not just market mechanisms.

### *Britain's 'New Rabble'*

"Underclass: The Crisis Deepens" and "The New Victorians . . . and the New Rabble" by Charles Murray, in *The Sunday Times* (May 22 and May 29, 1994), #1 Virginia St., London, England E1 9BD.

Charles Murray, best known for his controversial 1984 book, *Losing Ground*, in which he argued that America's Great Society social programs actually worsened the plight of the poor, reports from Britain that the British underclass is growing, too. Between 1987 and 1992, property crime in England and Wales rose by 42 percent; violent crime, by 40 percent. Out-of-wedlock births jumped from 23 percent of all births to 31 percent, and the proportion of unemployed men not even looking for work rose from 10 percent to 13 percent. Murray fears that from this upheaval may emerge "a new class system, drastically unlike the old, and much more hostile to free institutions."

The astonishing increase in illegitimacy since the mid-1970s is the "core phenomenon," Murray maintains: "The institution of the family in the dominant economic class of professionals and executives—call it the upper middle class—is in better shape than most people think, and is likely to get better. But the family is likely to continue to deteriorate among what the Victorians called the lower classes." In 1991, in the 10 census districts with the highest percentages of households with unskilled workers, 39 percent of the children were born out of wedlock, whereas in the 10 districts with the lowest percentages of such households, "only" 19 percent

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were. "The Britain in which the family has effectively collapsed does not consist just of blacks, or even the inner-city neighborhoods of London, Manchester, and Liverpool, but of lower-working-class communities everywhere," Murray says.

Among those in the upper middle class, Murray sees the emergence of a "New Victorianism" in the years ahead, as age works its ways on educated, affluent baby boomers. But at the bottom of British society, where the welfare-benefits system makes marriage economically unattractive, a large portion of what used to be the working class will go the way of the American underclass, with "high levels of criminality, child neglect and abuse, and drug use."

At some point, the traditional working class, consisting mostly of skilled workers and two-parent families, "will separate itself politically, socially, and geographically" from the "New Rabble." Taxpayer resentment and anger over the New Rabble's benefits will mount. "Within not many years, a political consensus for radical reform is going to coalesce"—one that could be authoritarian and repressive, Murray fears.

Any successful reform, he maintains, must recognize the "horribly sexist" truth: "The welfare of society requires that women actively avoid getting pregnant if they have no husband, and that women once again demand marriage from a man who would have them bear a child."

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### *How Asia Sees the West*

In *Asian Survey* (March 1994), Denny Roy, a lecturer in political science at the National University of Singapore, limns the so-called "soft authoritarianism" that has emerged in East Asia as an increasingly popular challenger to Western liberal democracy.

*Asian proponents argue that [soft authoritarianism] offers a better framework for political and economic development, and one more consistent with Asia's circumstances, than Western liberalism. Soft authoritarianism's growing legitimacy may signal a major change in the West's relationship with East Asia. . . .*

*The soft authoritarian challenge begins, much like the West's traditional Orientalist scholarship, with the premise that Asia and the West are fundamentally different. But this time Asia turns the tables by making the West its Other, contrasting favorable "Asian" traits such as industriousness, filial piety, selflessness, and chastity, with caricatures of negative "Western" characteristics. "By adverse, undesirable influence of Western culture," said former [Singapore] deputy prime minister and now president Ong Teng Cheong, "we mean their drug taking, and their paying too little attention to family relationships but stressing individualism, their emphasis on personal interest and not paying much importance to social or national interest." In addition . . . sexual pro-*

*miscuity and laziness round out the list of "Western" traits most commonly criticized. Singapore, in contrast, owes its success largely to its Asian roots, say officials such as former Prime Minister and now Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew who speaks of "core cultural values, those dynamic parts of Confucian culture which if lost will lower our performance."*

*As Western values differ from Asian values, so Western political concepts and institutions, it is argued, are not necessarily appropriate in an Asian setting. For one thing, the West confuses means with ends, says Lee, adding that "whilst democracy and human rights are worthwhile ideas, we should be clear that the real objective is good government." . . . Singapore portrays the West as a place with democracy but without good government. . . .*

*[But] even among its strongest proponents, the staying power of soft authoritarianism is not self-evident. Both Singaporean and Chinese officials have said political liberalization can be expected to follow economic development. Scholarly analysis suggests they are right.*

And the only way to make that happen, he insists, is to ensure that single women who bear children suffer economic penalties. For Britain, as for America, Murray warns, the stakes are high: nothing less than "the survival of free institutions and a civil society."

## *Il Duce Redux?*

"No, Italy Is Not Going Fascist" by Angelo M. Codevilla, in *Commentary* (Aug. 1994), 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

After industrialist Silvio Berlusconi's rightist coalition swept Italy's parliamentary elections last March, many European politicians and much of the prestige press in America began warning of the return of Mussolini-style fascism. Codevilla, a Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, contends that there is no need to worry.

True, he says, the National Alliance, one of the three roughly equal parts of the coalition, won 13.5 percent of the vote and five cabinet posts (out of 25) in Berlusconi's new government. And true, the National Alliance has a core of adherents who recall Benito Mussolini fondly, including the dictator's granddaughter. But if *fascism* means anything, Codevilla says, "it means government ownership and control of business. This was Mussolini's most corrupting legacy, and it is exactly what the new majority is committed to dismantling." Mussolini invented "most of the features of modern Italy's welfare state" and also laid the groundwork for the unique "partyocracy" that governed the nation after World War II: Whether Socialists or Christian Democrats ruled, government imposed a heavy tax burden on the country and shared the wealth with party members and friends. Disillusioned Italian voters, after two years of unrelenting corruption investigations, turned in March to Berlusconi's new party, Forza Italia, and its dis-

parate coalition partners, the National Alliance and the federalist Northern League.

Strong in prosperous northern Italy, the League attracts middle-class professionals who favor autonomy, especially fiscal autonomy, for the North and also a smaller central government. The National Alliance—strong in Rome, Naples, and elsewhere in the South—had the former Italian Social Movement (MSI), "a (truly) neo-fascist party," at its core, Codevilla notes. But during the 1990s, the MSI had attracted many new protest voters who "were not motivated by a rediscovered taste for Mussolini" and who pushed the party in new directions. Even Mussolini's granddaughter campaigned in Naples against the corporatist connection between government and business. The National Alliance, Codevilla



*If the boot fits, wear it? The March vote for a rightist coalition in Italy has been widely viewed as an ominous sign of resurgent fascism.*

argues, transcended neofascism.

"Nor does any Italian politician propose repeating Mussolini's policies in other spheres," Codevilla says. "Worries about World War II revisionism and a revival of anti-Semitism are particularly misplaced. No country has fewer redeeming memories of the war than Italy; even those who have kind words for Mussolini typically offer the caveat, 'except, of course, for the war.'" And postwar Italy has experienced little anti-Semitism. "Nowadays it is found mainly among the leftist university students who wear fashionable Palestinian headscarves." Rome's Jewish precincts voted for the Right in 1993 and 1994, and the new rightist government tilts toward Israel. The era of *Il Duce*, it appears, is safely past.

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## RESEARCH REPORTS

*Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions*

### **"Iran's National Security Policy: Capabilities, Intentions & Impact."**

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037. 106 pp. \$10.95

Author: *Shahram Chubin*

### **"Forever Enemies? American Policy & the Islamic Republic of Iran."**

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037. 144 pp. \$9.95

Author: *Geoffrey Kemp*

Fifteen years after forces loyal to the Ayatollah Khomeini drove out the Shah, the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran (pop. 60 million) is not enviable. Its economy—battered over the years by war, mismanagement, corruption, Western sanctions, diplomatic isolation, oil-market fluctuations, and natural disasters—is in shambles, with unemployment officially around 15 percent, inflation at 18 percent, and unofficial estimates of both far higher.

Iran's borders are unstable, it has only a few friends left in the world (notably, Syria and Pakistan), and worst of all, the Great Satan, a.k.a. the United States, is now the lone superpower on the planet and the chief military power in the Persian Gulf. What is a poor revolutionary regime to do? Answer: Begin a military buildup and, according to many Western intelligence analysts, embark on a covert nuclear weapons program.

While the Iranians do not appear to be anywhere near building a bomb yet, the prospect is

disquieting. "An Iranian nuclear capability will radically alter the balance of power in the Middle East," writes Kemp, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It also "will increase the dangers of military confrontation since there will be strong pressures from many sources to prevent . . . the deployment."

Iran's nuclear program now is at "a very preliminary stage, with a small research reactor operating and only tentative agreements on expansion," according to Chubin, an Iranian national and an independent scholar formerly with London's International Institute for Strategic Studies. But Iran does not lack well-educated scientists and engineers, and the disastrous state of its economy need not be a hindrance.

Iran's defeat in its 1980–88 war with Iraq had two main sources, says Kemp: "Khomeini's mistaken belief that infantry tactics based on human wave assaults by teenagers armed with the Koran could overwhelm the well-equipped Iraqi heretics, and the international arms

embargo against Iran," which crippled its air power.

From the war with Iraq and Desert Storm, President Hashemi Rafsanjani and other Iranian leaders have drawn the familiar lessons about preparedness and the value of deterrence. There is little reason to worry about Iran's conventional-arms buildup, Chubin and others believe. All evidence indicates that the country's arsenal is no more than half its pre-war size. But Iran's effort to arm itself with advanced missiles and chemical and nuclear weapons is another story.

While the "embryonic nuclear program" seems intended, in Chubin's view, "as a general hedge, an option, rather than a crash program with a particular enemy in mind," that is scant comfort to Iran's neighbors, or to the United States. Allied intelligence agencies, Kemp concludes, should develop "a much better capability to detect and, if necessary, prevent efforts by Iran to procure nuclear items and nuclear know-how on the black market."

### **"Net Loss: Fish, Jobs, and the Marine Environment."**

Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036–1904. 76 pp. \$5

Author: *Peter Weber*

The world's oceans are being overfished. The marine fish catch—which includes 85 percent fish, five

percent crustaceans, such as lobster, and 10 percent mollusks, such as clams—reached a peak of 82 million tons in 1989 and

has been stagnant since then. Atlantic fisheries have been hardest hit.

Yields from the centuries-old

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Atlantic cod fishery and other major marine fisheries actually began to top out and shrink during the 1960s, notes Weber, a research associate at the Worldwatch Institute. But, aided and encouraged by government subsidies—now estimated at \$54 billion annually—the fishing industry expanded and modernized its fleets, reached out to new fishing grounds, and began harvesting traditionally less desirable fish. Fishers also used bigger boats and advanced technology to increase their haul of high-value, hard-to-find species such as tuna and squid. Employing sat-

ellite data and aircraft to track tuna, for example, fishers boosted their catch from 1.7 million tons in 1970 to 4.1 million tons in 1989.

The world's fishing fleet grew from 585,000 large boats in 1970 to 1.2 million 20 years later. "We could go back to the 1970 fleet size and . . . we'd catch the same number of fish," says one fisheries analyst.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that the oceans could sustainably yield about 100 million tons of fish per year—about 20 million tons more than the catch in 1993. But to achieve

that potential increase, Weber notes, fishing first has to be reduced or temporarily eliminated in many fisheries, so that the fish populations are able to recover.

"The overcapacity of the world's fishing fleets means that the industry is in for a period of painful readjustment," Weber notes. "Who gets squeezed out has enormous implications for jobs and coastal communities. . . . If countries continue to favor large-scale, industrial-style fishing, some 14–20 million small-scale fishers and their communities are at risk."

### **"GAIN: Benefits, Costs, and Three-Year Impacts of a Welfare-to-Work Program."**

Manpower Demonstration Research Corp., Three Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. 404 pp. \$18

Authors: *James Riccio et al.*

In trying to move welfare recipients into the world of work, it may be better to stress the need to get any job, even a low-paying one, than to emphasize how training might lead to a "good" job. So suggests this study of California's Greater Avenues of Independence (GAIN) program by Riccio and others at Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

GAIN, launched in 1986, is one of the biggest welfare-to-work programs in the United States. In the study, 33,000 welfare recipients in six counties were tracked for three years. Half were enrolled in GAIN; half were put in control groups receiving no special treatment.

The counties' approaches varied. In Riverside, a large county with both urban and rural areas, GAIN participants,

even those assigned to receive education and training, were strongly advised that "almost any job [was] a positive first step, with advancement to come by acquiring a work history and learning skills on the job," Riccio and his colleagues report. A different tack was taken in Alameda County, which includes Oakland. There, the GAIN participants were urged to be selective about jobs and to take advantage of the education and training GAIN offered. The four other counties—including Los Angeles and San Diego—leaned toward this approach.

Riverside County achieved impressive results. The average work earnings of the single parents in its GAIN group, for example, were more than \$3,000 (or nearly 50 percent) higher for the three-year period than the

non-GAIN Riverside control group's, and average total Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payments were 15 percent lower. In Alameda County, by contrast, the GAIN group's earnings were \$1,500 (or 30 percent) higher than the control group's, and welfare payments were five percent lower.

For the six counties as a whole, GAIN boosted average earnings by \$1,414, or 22 percent, and lowered welfare payments by six percent. But GAIN's success in getting single parents permanently off welfare was limited. In the last quarter of the third year, 53 percent of the GAIN participants in the six counties were receiving AFDC—a proportion only three percentage points less than the rate for the "controls" who were not enrolled in the GAIN program.

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## COMMENTARY

*We welcome timely letters from readers, especially those who wish to amplify or correct information published in the Quarterly and/or react to the views expressed in our essays. The writer's telephone number and address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.*

### Looking at the Info Superhighway

The perceptive essays on the National Information Infrastructure (NII) ["Wired for What?," *WQ*, Summer '94] touch on many of the important chords in what is surely the greatest social and technical undertaking of our time, but I would offer these comments.

First, the "enormous" costs of the NII have been wildly overstated by various stakeholders seeking competitive advantage or a government handout. Even if basic connectivity for digital interactive services to homes, businesses, and public-sector institutions were to equal \$100 billion, which is at the high end of various estimates, such a sum is well within the reach of public and private investment by those who will benefit from the NII. What is more important from a policy perspective is who pays it, and what concessions, if any, are made because of public-interest considerations.

Second, the combination of digital-information appliances and a worldwide electronic network is producing a vast enabling of human potential. Many recent critics of the NII bemoan the downside of such enabling—such as antisocial behavior on the Net—and suggest applying new controls. Are these the same citizens who prize their liberties under the Bill of Rights? More seriously, there is an underlying theme of anti-intellectual proletarian egalitarianism in some Internet/NII criticism which much be resisted. In an era of AIDS, widespread malnutrition, fratricide based on ignorance, and similar ills, we need every ounce of collaborative brilliance from our most talented men and women, something the Net can help provide.

Finally, let's not spoil the fun of network discovery by too much critical cerebration. When I was a small boy, my grandfather helped me revive a Model T resting in the weeds behind his garage. It was a thrill to crank like crazy and then run back to advance the spark and adjust the choke. That's a fine metaphor for today's Internet. Our kids, and many grown-ups, are exploring the frontiers of cyberspace and accomplishing good works in the process. With tolerance, good will, and hard work, we can enter the Information Age gracefully.

*Michael M. Roberts  
Vice President, Networking  
Educom Networking and  
Telecommunications Task Force  
Washington, D.C.*

Your contributors on the information superhighway should have said a few more words about privacy protection.

One of the obvious consequences of moving from broadcast technologies to digital networks is the creation of incalculable amounts of transactional data—detailed information about personal activities. Coupled with the growing commodification of personal information, the pressure to keep the personal private will certainly mount as the info highway unfolds.

For example, when state utility commissioners looked closely at Calling Line ID, one of the much-heralded features of the digital network, they concluded that a substantial loss of privacy would follow. Personal phone numbers, once disclosed at the discretion of customers, were now offered for sale by telephone companies. For a price, consumers could buy back the right to keep the numbers private. The benefits of the service turned out to be more virtual than real. Strong regulatory safeguards followed. In some states, the service was simply dropped.

The Europeans also have begun to struggle with the privacy implications of digital networks. The European Commission has described privacy protection as "a necessary precondition to the offering of advanced networks services." Comprehensive policies have been developed along with proposals for "technologies of privacy," such as encryption and pseudonymous transactions.

Unfortunately, Washington is moving in the wrong direction on the privacy road. Not only has the White House ignored consumer privacy concerns, it has embraced the Clipper Chip, a plan for electronic surveillance developed by the National Security Agency. If this is joined with the FBI's pending legislative proposal to outlaw technologies that cannot be wiretapped, the United States will become the first government since the fall of the Berlin Wall to put in place a technological infrastructure for communications surveillance.

Is this progress?

*Marc Rotenberg  
Electronic Privacy Information Center  
Washington, D.C.*

Few prognosticators have yet recognized the technical possibilities of advanced internetworking.

# Thirty-five Years of Newspaper Work

A MEMOIR BY

## H. L. MENCKEN

EDITED BY FRED HOBSON,  
VINCENT FITZPATRICK, AND  
BRADFORD JACOBS

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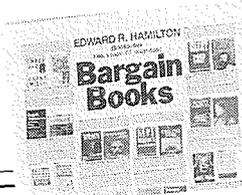
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Take *multiplexing*, the art of combining more than one type of signal on a high-bandwidth transmission medium. That black cable snaking into your home just might give you 10 megabyte-per-second access to the Internet as well as all those junky cable TV channels. In short, one NII vision doesn't have to drive another one out. The existence of multiplexing suggests that the future will bring us more networking choices than most NII commentators predict.

Any attempt to consider the NII's future ought to consider, too, the possibilities raised by another technical achievement, *internetworking*. The Internet isn't a physical network—it's a set of standards that permits dissimilar networks to link (hence *internet*). This allows computers of any brand or model—including computers not yet invented—to exchange text, graphics, sounds, and even video. Furthermore, Internet data can traverse *every kind of physical network that's ever been invented*. That's one of the reasons the Internet is growing at such a phenomenal rate—you can choose any brand of computer or network you like and still hook up to the Internet.

This fact alone gives the Internet more staying power than most commentators assume. Add it up. First, it's a relatively trivial matter to include Internet compatibility in computer and networking devices. Second, doing so doesn't drive out other services. And third, including such compatibility widens the scope of resources that a network can offer. Recognizing these facts, most of the major on-line information services, such as CompuServe and America Online, are offering Internet connectivity, as are growing numbers of cable TV systems.

In short: The future of democratic networking, in which users can originate as well as consume information, isn't in doubt. There's too much to be gained by offering connectivity to what will soon become an Internet of 50 or 60 million computers worldwide. What remains to be seen is whether internetworking can take on broader social and economic significance than is indicated by its present role, namely, as a useful resource for academics, professionals, technical specialists, and upper-middle-class homeowners.

Bryan Pfaffenberger  
Division of Technology, Culture,  
and Communications  
School of Engineering and Applied Science  
Univ. of Va.  
Charlottesville, Va.

Each of the three articles serves as a corrective to the immense hype about the "information super-highway" that has dominated public discussions

and journalists' accounts during the past two years. The NII has served as a political symbol, and like all symbols, it obscures significant social complexities. Tom Maddox raises important ethical issues about the meaning of investments in an advanced NII when many people live without adequate food, housing, and jobs. I suspect that one allure of the virtual world is a seductive freedom to ignore the pains of everyday life and the difficulty of complex social choices. The authors all show how these virtual seductions can be illusory.

Douglas Gomery is especially sharp in pointing out the large direct costs and even larger hidden costs of computerization. His analysis helps us understand the shallowness of the Clinton-Gore proposals to "wire" every classroom, public library, and medical clinic. While the wiring is costly, the schools and libraries will have to invest even larger sums in a technical world where rapid innovation and intense competition make equipment and information formats obsolete every few years.

Even so, Clinton and Gore deserve applause for creating an opportunity for serious public debate about the nature of new high-tech information infrastructures. Switched interactive systems that enable any party to communicate with any other seem a prerequisite for systems that can support democratic discourse. Although relatively few people may use them, Gomery is far too casual in dismissing technological forms that support grassroots communication as "gold-plated"—especially when the alternative is 500 channels dominated by infotainment and home shopping. If cost alone determined good social policies, then we could also have one centralized U.S. national newspaper and one set of journalists to provide us with national and international news!

Edward Tenner takes the analysis to a deeper level by asking how the current set of materials that help energize the Internet—the LISTSERVs, Usenet newsgroups, World Wide Web servers, and their complex mass of documents—have been produced by our social system. Tenner is on the mark in his observations on the sociology of network life. He has concisely identified the cultural contradictions of "anarchy" promoted within bureaucratic contexts, the ways that "deep" organizations have sponsored the creation and communication of knowledge, and the fact that the Net does more than connect people—it can divide them. His article merits careful reading by anyone who wants to understand the less obvious sociology of the Internet and its successors.

Rob Kling  
Dept. of Information & Computer Science  
and Graduate School of Management  
Univ. of Calif., Irvine

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In his article, "In Search of the Cybermarket," Douglas Gomery writes, "The notion that people who spend dozens of hours watching sitcoms every week and never read a newspaper will somehow be transformed into Renaissance men and women by the availability of new information services in the home seems overly hopeful, to say the least."

A sheet of yellow paper and a pen doesn't make you a writer, and a computer with a modem doesn't make you connected; it is education that helps the individual to take advantage of such resources. The reason previous interactive multimedia tests failed is that subscribers were not properly educated to think of using the device as something more than a television remote control. Educators should begin teaching at the earliest age that learning new information and searching for answers are fun. Education is the best hope of transforming television viewers into teleputer (my word for a machine that combines the telephone, television, and computer) users. But such a goal is delayed when education is dismissed as one of the "other realms" less important than business and government, as it was in the introduction to the cluster.

Paul Lester  
Director, Visual Communication Division  
Association for Educators in Journalism  
and Mass Communications (AEJMC)  
Fullerton, Calif.

## Population Question(s) Revisited

George Moffett's essay ["The Population Question Revisited," *WQ*, Summer '94] does an admirable job of describing the complex issues surrounding world population growth, but I wish he had explored more fully the interactions among family size, household structure, and economic development.

John Caldwell, in *Theory of Fertility Decline* (1982), describes two modes of production: the *familial mode*, in which production occurs within the household, and the *labor market mode*, in which production takes place elsewhere. The familial mode encourages large families because family members provide the labor for production. Large family size tends to persist even after households have made the transition to the labor market mode, because the familial "morality" continues to dictate a pattern of wealth flow from the children to the parents. In the familial mode, children often are considered a replaceable production component; this view lowers the incentive for investment in the well-being of any particular child, contributing to

high levels of infant and child mortality.

In the labor market mode of production, which is most common in industrialized countries, large families become less desirable, as educating children for market participation makes them a burden rather than a productive asset. Furthermore, the traditional payoff for investing in a child's education—security in old age—often is thwarted by the child's individualism, which the market system engenders. The fully developed labor market mode of production offers parents no rewards for high fertility, or indeed for any fertility at all. Consequently, market economies tend to promote the dissolution of families, creating new patterns of household structure.

A full characterization of incentives affecting family size in various parts of the world requires much more detail, but there is no question that patterns of household economic activity are of central importance. Shifts in the economic position and function of households will be a major part of the story as humanity moves toward a more sustainable global system.

Rob Coppock, Director  
The 2050 Project  
World Resources Institute/Brookings Institution/  
Santa Fe Institute  
Washington, D.C.

George Moffett's excellent article overlooks one important possibility. The far-out (in space as well as time) solution to the population explosion is out of this world. I'm not a starry-eyed trekkie, but I'm convinced that we humans will ultimately thrive beyond the confines of planet Earth. Our deep-space program is resting after the successful moon ventures, but it will start up again someday.

R. H. Wilson  
Chapel Hill, N.C.

George Moffett's article moves us in the right direction but not with enough speed and precision for policymaking. There is not, as the title of the article suggests, a population question, but a number of closely interrelated questions that must be asked and answered before an informed policy debate on the types of issues raised in the article can occur.

First, how many people do we expect to inhabit the earth in the future? Despite our obsession with numbers there still exist widespread popular misunderstandings concerning the sources of population growth and the nature and dangers of demographic momentum. Second, who are these people? Characteristics such as age, gender, and racial and

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ethnic composition are crucial to understanding the structure and dynamics of demographic change. Third, where will people live? The spatial distribution and movement of people are key factors in assessing the potential stresses in ecological and social systems. Finally, how will they live? This addresses issues of consumption and human preferences for environmentally critical resources such as energy, materials, water, and land.

These characteristics intersect at many points. For instance, consumption patterns are influenced by age, gender, and place of residence. Migration is highly correlated with age and may be linked to environmental degradation (eco-migration). Unraveling these interrelations will require more science than we have been willing to commit to, both in the United States and internationally.

Moffett's article does provide a clue to why many environmental policymakers are living in a state of demographic bliss and ignorance. Good policy cannot be built on one-dimensional debates between charismatic personalities or on one-time studies by well-intentioned graduate students. If the test of science is its ability to predict, then we truly lack a science of population and the environment and thus the basis for long-range, anticipatory environmental policy. We do not have the type of scientific information we need to begin thinking intelligently and compassionately about population. We have neglected the necessary investments in research on population and environmental linkages; we have allowed ideology, anecdote, and dogma to pass for scientific understanding; and we have been satisfied with simplistic answers to complex problems. In the wake of the Cairo conference an important challenge will be coming to grips with our own ignorance concerning the critical relationships between people and nature.

David Rejeski  
Director, Future Studies Unit  
Office of Policy, Planning & Evaluation  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Washington, D.C.

## Taking Issue with Hamilton

Your recent issue inspires comment on two of its offerings. First, the piece on Alexander Hamilton ["Hamilton's Legacy," *WQ*, Summer '94] contains two errors. John Marshall was the fourth, not the first, chief justice of the Supreme Court. And the kind of protectionism advocated by Hamilton and many of his intellectual heirs may have been both appropriate and effective in a world where international commerce consisted of competing na-

tional interests. But, as Peter Drucker, Robert Reich, and others have pointed out, all business today is international business, and it no longer makes sense to think in terms of governments protecting "their" economic interests against other governments. A tariff war today would have disastrous results for "American" business and for world trade, a fact which Hamilton surely would have realized.

The other point evoking a response is Charles Blitzer's essay ["From the Center"] on the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and its aftermath, the irony of the vast growth in segregation in the years since 1954. In his critique of busing as a strategy, Blitzer overlooks the fact that for decades before *Brown*, schoolchildren of both races were regularly bused considerable distances, a state of affairs that aroused little opposition because its purpose was to preserve segregation. When it became a means to promote integration, busing became a target. It has failed to produce integration for a variety of reasons, most of which are related to residential factors that have resisted change. Most of the inhabitants of our inner cities lacking the money and job opportunities to move have no option but to remain in the isolated ghettos.

William Graham Cole  
Chicago, Ill.

My husband and I read Michael Lind's article, "Hamilton's Legacy," with interest and appreciation, agreeing with Lind that Hamilton is the man for our times. The opening section, however, is unfortunate, though not through any fault of the author's. Media coverage of the reconstruction of the former Soviet empire has been inadequate and simplistic. But Hamiltonianism has been quite consciously used by crucial players in the process. Professor Jeffrey Sachs, for example, who has been the chief architect of privatization, is an ardent Hamiltonian. He has read my husband's biography of Hamilton and has asked how Hamilton's ideas could be applied to Poland and Russia, precisely because he recognizes that Hamilton was "the most practical nation builder among the Founding Fathers." And the first finance minister in Poland, the man most responsible for starting and directing the reconstruction of the Polish economy, Leszek Balcerowicz, read the Hamilton biography and discussed it fully with our son, who at that time was a business consultant to the Polish government. Similarly there are people in the U.S. Treasury Department and State Department now working on projects related to the Russian and Eastern European reconstructions who have read

---

and studied Hamilton and appreciate the applicability of Hamiltonianism. Occasionally they send us their speeches or articles that use Hamiltonian arguments or Hamiltonian examples. Though Hamilton is not getting the play that he deserves in the newspapers, he is receiving serious attention from people who are actually doing something.

I also would like to make a minor correction. Hamilton was not "the only non-native among the Founding Fathers." William Paterson was born in County Antrim, Ireland. Thomas Fitzsimons was born in Ireland, and incidentally had quite a "head for commerce," becoming one of Philadelphia's "merchant princes." James Wilson was born in Fifeshire, Scotland. Robert Morris was born near Liverpool, England, and his head for commerce was quite the equal of Hamilton's—the firm of Willing, Morris and Company was enormously successful and his capacity for commerce and finance made possible the financing of the Revolutionary War. James McHenry was born in Ballymena, Ireland, and educated in Dublin. William R. Davie was born in County Cumberland, England. Pierce Butler was born in County Carlow, Ireland, and was a major in the British army before he settled in South Carolina. So there were actually a number of "non-natives" at the Constitutional Convention.

One last mention. Elizabeth Wright, who publishes a small magazine called *Issues and Views*, is a strong Hamiltonian who is introducing Hamiltonianism to her audience of black middle-class entrepreneurs. Hamilton has the answers for them, not only because he was one of the Founding Fathers who was most vehemently opposed to slavery but because he saw that the monetization of society would make possible upward mobility and the destruction of the stifling hierarchies that existed. The Grange has become a symbol for black capitalists—its location and its promise have drawn their attention.

*Ellen (Mrs. Forrest) McDonald  
Coker, Ala.*

*Michael Lind replies:* I had no idea that Sachs and other American economists advising the Eastern Europeans were inspired by Hamilton. My personal knowledge has been limited to lawyers making the trek to the ex-Soviet bloc; they uniformly extol Jefferson and present constitutionalism as a method for inducing governmental paralysis. Fortunately, most of the Eastern Europeans seem to be more influenced by the examples of the Western European parliamentary democracies.

Of course, Hamilton was not "the only non-native among the Founding Fathers." This should

have been "among the *familiar* Founding Fathers," a category in which, alas, Wilson and Morris are not found. (Perhaps they, too, can be rehabilitated.)

## Talking Theory

I write to compliment you on "By Theory Possessed" ["At Issue," *WQ*, Summer '94]. It's right on target. If it's any comfort, many of us still stress the facts unadorned by half-baked theories.

As one who teaches Asian politics, I have a great interest in population issues. It was a pleasure to read the informative and very balanced article by George Moffett.

*Donald W. Klein  
Political Science Dept.  
Tufts Univ.  
Medford, Mass.*

"By Theory Possessed" was right on the money. Not only in academia and in journalism are the "facts and figures" glossed over in favor of theorizing. In psychology and psychiatry, some mind-boggling conclusions have resulted in almost cultist diagnostic and therapeutic movements. We need only to read recent jurisprudence or the congressional record to see how much the free-wheeling theorizing has penetrated law and politics.

I am, however, chagrined to note your opinion that America's "liberal creed" has "cut itself off from the religious traditions that once tempered its worst traits—its selfish individualism and its spiritual aridity." It appears you have confused the "liberal creed" with libertarianism. Selfish individualism is not a trait of the secular humanist, who consciously has rejected the "religious" traditions. "Spiritual aridity" may well be preferred to the torrent of religious theorizing that has led to unbelievable cruelty and large-scale extermination of unbelievers.

*Edward A. Nol, M.D.  
Birmingham, Mich.*

## Creationism or Intelligent Design?

In "The Periodical Observer" [*WQ*, Summer '94, p. 142], I read with great interest the summary of Kenneth R. Miller's article, "Life's Grand Design." The summary indicates that Miller finds the structure of the eye to be flawed, indicating an incompatibility with creationism and intelligent-design theory. He states that such flaws are evidence of

the trial-and-error nature of evolution.

Miller's sense of what constitutes perfection constrains the Creator to a human perception of what "ought" to be.

When scientific thinking tries to assess the role of a Creator, it seems to be based on the thought that if God were to *fill in the blank*, it would be perfect—according to the human perception of perfection. When this is not the case, this "nonperfection" is taken as evidence of either God's nonexistence or non-participation in creation. The flaw here is the arrogance of pretending to know what constitutes perfection. Miller makes this mistake regarding the eye. How do we (or can we) know if the light-blocking effects of the manner in which the eye is wired is really a flaw? The cephalopod eye, wired posteriorly to the retina, does not seem to provide a significantly greater visual acuity than the vertebrate eye.

In addition, I found the last sentence the most amusing: "Which is not to say . . . that evolution and a belief in God are incompatible." The only non-incompatible approach is the deist approach. Even so, we must then ask: At what point did the deist creator stop interfering in creation? Before the Big Bang? After the inflationary period? When the dinosaurs died out? The deist creator is thus constrained by time considerations. After 15 billion years, it has been sent out to some cosmic nursing home, to be trotted out for what amounts to hypocritical displays of reverence on Rosh Hashanah or Christmas. This makes it a powerful human, but not God, who is unconstrained by either time or space (or anything else, for that matter).

There are those of us who believe in an imminent and transcendent Creator who do not deny evolution—indeed, the evidence (to date) appears quite supportive. The concept of an active Creator, however, ineluctably implies an intelligent design to evolution. The difference is that those of us who believe this likewise appreciate that God has not shared the faculty of omniscience with us.

Douglas A. Landy, M.D.  
Traverse City, Mich.

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## FROM THE CENTER

One morning last August I was privileged to attend a small bill-signing ceremony in the Oval Office. The legislation in question provides that the open space leading from Pennsylvania Avenue to the new building under construction for the Woodrow Wilson Center, and the circular area defined in part by that building's curved northern facade, shall be designated "Woodrow Wilson Plaza." While scarcely earthshaking as legislation goes, Public Law 103-284 represents the first official step toward the realization of Congress's intention in 1968 that the Center should occupy a visible, distinctive building on Washington's great ceremonial avenue. Surprisingly often, I have learned, such small, essentially symbolic steps turn out to be the key to the accomplishment of larger and more significant goals.

As I stood behind the president's desk while the official copy of the bill was carefully placed before him and the proper number of pens was laid out so that each of the 11 spectators could receive one, I found myself reflecting upon the nearly year-long process that had led to this moment. Precisely because the legislation is astonishingly brief (42 words, to be precise), as uncontroversial as one might hope for, and—surely most important of all these days—completely cost free (or "revenue neutral," as we now say), it highlights some aspects of the legislative process that tend to become obscured by the titanic political confrontations, the philosophical debates, and the lobbying campaigns that inevitably result when great issues are at stake. Absent all of these elements, the history of P.L. 103-284 reveals the bare bones of a peculiar, often frustrating, occasionally exasperating institution that somehow still manages to produce results more often than is generally recognized.

After nearly a quarter-century on the fringes of our government, I was not surprised by much of what I observed and experienced in my efforts to assist in the passage of the Woodrow Wilson Plaza Act of 1994. Here I think particularly of two phenomena: first, the apparently irresistible temptation of senators and representatives to hold even the smallest and most innocuous bills hostage in order to gain support for legislation

dear to their hearts (or interests). At one point I was told that the fate of our tiny bill depended upon the resolution of a pitched struggle over water rights in the West. And second, the similar tendency of the Senate and the House of Representatives to withhold action on something the other body—or even a single important member of the other body—wants until it has gotten in return something *it* wants.

In our case, these maneuvers occasionally assumed almost farcical proportions. On the morning of the day the House was to adjourn for its Fourth of July recess—now, incidentally, officially called its Independence Day District Work Period—I was called and told that if the Senate were to pass three House-originated "naming" bills that very day, then "our" Senate-originated bill, which was already on the suspension calendar, would immediately be passed by the House. This was the day when the Senate Finance Committee was in the desperate last stage of its attempt to report out a health-care bill before *its*

recess. Although hesitant to intrude at such a moment, I was surprised and delighted to receive a solemn promise that the moment the House acted on the Woodrow Wilson Plaza Bill, the Senate would pass the House bills. When I cheerfully reported this

to the chief of staff of the relevant House committee, I was told that I had missed the point completely; the agreement had been that the Senate would act first and the House committee had no intention of acting until then. And so the House adjourned, leaving us precisely where we had been before.

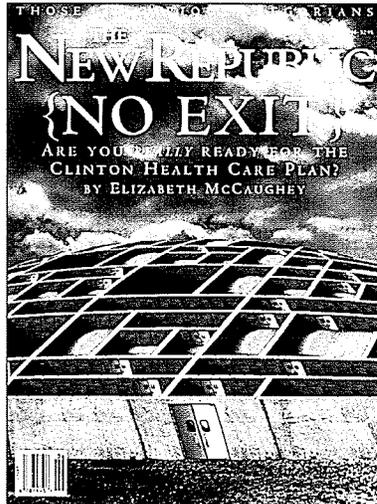
Happily, the impasse was resolved during the recess—a gracious and sensible senator relented—and so a few days later I found myself in the Oval Office. I left with two of the pens used to sign the Woodrow Wilson Plaza Act, one given me by the president, the other by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D.-N.Y.). One will be framed with the law to grace the walls of our new building. The other I am tempted to give to one of the anonymous people known in Washington simply as "staff," whose role in the legislative—indeed the governmental—process is even more critical than I had realized after all these years.

Charles Blitzer  
Director



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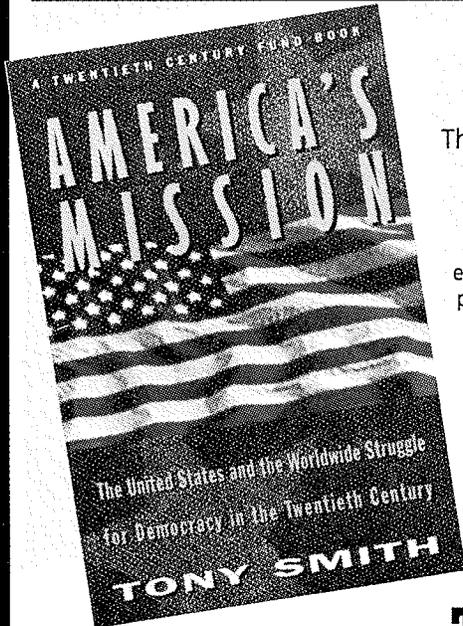
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