

Counterpoint

The University of Chicago's Conservative Quarterly Spring 2010

A Symposium on

Influential Books on Politics

Charles Lipson • Richard A. Epstein • John Podhoretz • Tod Lindberg • Ajay Ravichandran
Kevin Jiang • Josh Lerner • Cory Liu • Jeremy Rozansky • George Saad • Michael Talent

Making A Modern Conservatism

The Neoconservatives and the Paleoconservatives, Twenty Years Later

Josh Lerner

How America Found A Winning Counterinsurgency Strategy

Andrew Peters

The Tea Party and the Possibility of Conservative Populism

Jeremy Rozansky

Taking Music Seriously Irony and Sincerity in Lady Gaga and Natalie Merchant

George Saad

Freedom and the Absence of Arbitrary Force

A Response to Etan Heller

Alastair Cleve

Protecting Free Speech

Citizen's United v. FEC

Bryant Jackson-Green

Change

A Survey of Major Midterm Races

Michael Talent

Plus:

The Editors cover the Reg arrest, immigration activism, and much more.

Counterpoint

Spring 2010 Volume 1, Issue 2

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We at Counterpoint seek to publish thoughts which reveal the principles and practices of American politics, policymaking, religion, and society. We are conservative in the sense that we find wisdom in the time-tested, vigor in enduring morality, and greatness in the ordered liberty of the American polity.

We are accepting submissions and letters to the editor for our Autumn 2010 issue. Please email submissions and letters to counterpoint.chicago@gmail.com

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Incidents on 57th Street

So, the same week that Justice John Paul Stevens (AB '41) resigns from the Supreme Court, the Law School jumps to 5th in the *US News and World Report* Rankings for the first time. It's not every day that the legal profession gets a boost quite like that.

The arrest of a student on University property is always of interest to the campus as a whole. When the dual shibboleths of race and class emerge in said arrest, however, passions are bound to get wound up and make a deliberative, rational discourse all but impossible. The accepted facts are as follows: Maurice Dawson, an African American fourth-year, was arrested in the A-level of the Regenstein Library for "criminal trespassing and resisting arrest" after he was repeatedly told by a library technician to be quiet. According to several sources, the officers who arrived on the scene proceeded to put Mr. Dawson in a chokehold and drag him out of the Reg. The fact that the accuser and the arresting officer were both African American rarely garners anywhere near the attention of the accusations of racism—a charge that neither goes away nor can be disproven (how does someone go about proving that they are not a racist?). Given the supposedly post-racial features of our society, we should be far past instinctual accusations of racism or racial profiling. We should not need ridiculous gimmicks like the Presidential Beer Summit to smooth over racial animus in America, nor should we actively seek out instances of racial grievances to illustrate banal points. Race should not be the be-all-end-all of any given issue, nor should we be so afraid to talk about it that we simply react in abject horror whenever the accusation of racism is hurled around.

Plato remarks that "poetry is nearer to vital truth than history." The superiority of poetry to history is certainly the presumption that Students for Justice in Palestine has been recently operating under. For the second time in as many months, SJP has organized an anti-Israel slam poetry fest combining hip-hoppers, traveling independent bookstore acts, and other k'fia-clad types who receive swelling snaps when they manage to rhyme "Israel" with "one big prison cell." If SJP has given up on historical fact and decided to replace it with daft, nonsensical poetry, then we commend their honest

self-reflection. But we suspect, rather, SJP recognizes their common cause with slam. Slam asks that poetry be celebrated not for the sense of its words but for the force of its presentation. Anti-Israel campus groups do not easily give up on their predilection to vacuous intellectual bullying.

With the arrival of Spring Quarter, our wonderfully stoic and serious campus has its wit matched ever so briefly by the splendid flowering of springtime. The administration has, in recent years, sought to amend this situation by providing the campus with a year-round increase in collective "beauty"—and, no, we're not talking students. The "beautification" of campus, as it has been described, involves the University hiring many construction crews to dig up sidewalks that did not need to be fixed, replace austere gates with slightly more unassuming ones, eliminate through traffic in the quadrangle, and generally create perpetual disruption on an already busy campus. While the University spends good money on superficial improvements, many departments remain well underfunded, and more important projects—like the Milton Friedman Institute—anguish in a state of administrative purgatory. No prospective student has ever, we certainly hope, chosen the University of Chicago based on a recent rearrangement of the slate on its pathways. Do we wish to attract students that would?

Grievance is among the most self-fulfilling of human passions and its central place in our politics is sadly inescapable. Through March and April, the University of Chicago Coalition for Immigrant Rights held a series of events on immigration policy. On April 8th, the Social Sciences building was home to a panel on what was dubbed "comprehensive immigration reform." Such a reform will require a careful balance of national interest with the desire for woebegotten human beings to be treated with mercy and dignity. The whole event, however, was an exercise in victimization; no attempt was made on the part of the organizers to address real concerns of American sovereignty, entitlement and other costs, and the threat posed by the spillover of the low impact civil war of drug cartels and the Mexican government. Solving

immigration in the United States will require something other than simply being aggrieved.

University of Chicago Coalition for Immigrant Right's activities were not limited to self-gratifying panels. They have since started gathering signatures on a twofold petition: it urges the University first to set aside money to award significant merit aid to "undocumented" students and, second to lobby Congress to legalize all "undocumented" students who have attended American high schools. The first asks the University to grant special privilege to a subpopulation distinguished by their violation of American law; the second asks the University to cease being an investigative institution in a political world and become an interest-group lobbyist. We doubt the administration will acquiesce to the petition, but the UCCIR deserves credit for boldness—if boldness were a political virtue.

Sexual assault is a strange term. It manages to treat a humiliating, dignity-depriving, and profane act as a subcategory of a category of violence. This is a consequence of a bedfellowship of the sexual and feminist liberations. The former sought to free us from our puritan convention and release our natural impulses; the latter sought to eliminate the differences between men and women. With the conventions that had formerly regulated the darker sides of our nature made impossible by the sexual revolution, public regulations were needed as a replacement in order to protect women from powerful, vengeful, and polyamorous men. To preserve the sexual liberation, one must speak of sex in casual terms. To preserve the feminist gains, one must resort to bureaucratic means. Each liberation is therefore threatened by "inadequate" sexual assault laws, so it is not surprising that the largely student-composed Working Group on Sexual Assault Policy would have worked obsessively since 2007 reviewing the University's policy. The basic detail of their imagined reform is a centralization of the department-by-department system, so that conflicts of interest in small departments may be avoided. Their product, a referendum against the status-

quo, was passed in late April by the student body. With the victory of the sexual liberation and the feminists, conservatives must, in the short term, relent to the bureaucratic mechanism. However, we do not see the reform as an obvious improvement in the bureaucracy, so we are ambivalent about its passage. While one conflict of interest may be lessened, we worry that those professors who volunteer to sit on the centralized review board will have the reverse bias (in favor of the accuser). This loss may be minor; what was really lost was lost a long time ago.



Long-time professors Amy and Leon Kass. Via neh.gov

For the past thirty-four years, Diogenes has not needed to look beyond the University of Chicago. This spring marks the final quarter for a defining institution of this University: the professorships of Leon R. and Amy A. Kass. Mr. Kass took a career in biochemical research and an inkling about the indispensability of moral guidance to our technological future and

searched for assistance from the classic texts. Chairing the Fundamentals Department for two decades, Mr. Kass taught, to name a few, bioethics, Rousseau, Aristotle, and, as its wisdom gnawed at him, the Hebrew Scripture. In 2001, he lessened his courseload and served as the chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics for five years. The President's Council represented the magnificent possibility of republican governance: a free-flowing, unpredictable forum of brilliant men and women who, for a short time, made human dignity an explicit precept of our politics. Mrs. Kass has played a significant part in the foundation of the core Humanities sequence Human Being and Citizen, as well as the Fundamentals Major. Her inquiry is also into the human things: philanthropy, love, courtship, and men and women. Through instruction and compilation, Mrs. Kass has provided articles and anthologies that should continue to nourish philanthropic and erotic spirits. Often working together as teachers and writers, and always as dialectical partners, Mr. and Mrs. Kass have been tutors and examples to many a class of the University of Chicago in living sweetly, generously, humanely, and with dignity. Perhaps the greatest testament to Mr. and Mrs. Kass is that Diogenes' light will still shine upon students and colleagues within our imperfect institution.

Protecting Free Speech

In defense of

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission

By Bryant Jackson-Green

Campaign reform policy has remained a highly controversial issue in America over the past few decades. On the one hand, there is a desire to keep America's political process clean, free from the potentially distorting influence of big money in the political arena, with politicians and American government beholden to corporate and union interests. On the other hand, civil liberties advocates claim that campaign finance regulations are an unconstitutional violation of the First-Amendment guaranteed right to free speech. Earlier this year, the Supreme Court made a critical decision addressing this very issue: *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, a 5-4 decision which overturned Congressional legislation and Supreme Court precedent prohibiting corporations from using treasury funds on advertisements advocating the election or defeat of a given candidate for national office.

The primary question raised by the controversy is this: are regulations prohibiting corporate expenditures on political advocacy constitutional? In order to properly answer this question, we must examine two other questions upon which the answer relies – are corporations covered by the first amendment guarantee to free speech, and can spending on political advertisements be properly considered an expression of speech? I argue that the government has no constitutional role to play in regulating the political discourse and in light of the fact that money is, in fact, necessary for the promotion of political stances in the marketplace of ideas, it necessarily follows that the use of money towards these ends must be defended from government intrusion.

Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission: Setting or Restoring Precedent?

The case in question centers around a film created by Citizens United, a politically conservative non-profit corporation, entitled *Hillary: the Movie*. The film, a feature-length documentary, was clearly an attack on then Senator

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Clinton's presidential aspirations during the 2008 election season. Although the production had already been released on DVD and in theatres, Citizens United sought to have the film shown via video on demand (VOD) services through cable providers, in hopes of widening its viewing base before the upcoming election.

The problem was that the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, also known as the McCain-Feingold Act after its primary sponsors, prohibited corporations from directly spending on a certain kind of advertisement called "electioneering communications" within 30 days of an election. According to the Federal Election Commission, electioneering communications are broadcasts that "[refer] to a clearly identified candidate for federal office" and are "publicly distributed shortly before an election for the office that candidate is seeking," and "[are] targeted to the relevant electorate." If, for example, a corporation wished to spend its funds on a television advertisement denouncing or supporting a candidate, such a project would be prohibited under law. These regulations were taken up with the intention of preserving the integrity of democratic electoral process. If, the argument goes, corporations are permitted to spend unlimited amounts in advertisements to support their preferred candidates, the large amount of capital they possess will enable them to flood the airwaves, distorting the political discourse.

But in a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court saw this issue differently. Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy criticized the FEC regulations, and the motivations behind them, as having a perverse effect on free speech—particularly political speech, which is necessary for the proper functioning of democracy:

The First Amendment "has its fullest and most urgent application" to speech uttered during a campaign for political office...For these reasons, political speech must prevail against laws that would suppress it, whether by design or inadvertence."

The majority clearly framed regulations prohibiting the use of funds on electioneering advertisements as a suppression of speech, limiting the civic discourse that

might otherwise exist without said regulations. As a matter of protecting freedom of speech, according to the court, they could not be upheld.

Yet, this particular case, while arguably the most high profile case touching on campaign finance reform in recent memory, was by no means the first to come before the Supreme Court. The trend of judicial decisions regarding campaign finance and corporate persons can be divided into two distinct stances: a “pre-Austin” and “post-Austin” line of reasoning. The former upheld First Amendment protections as applicable to corporations. Among these cases, two in particular stand out: In *First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*, it was decided that a Massachusetts law preventing business corporations from “making contributions or expenditures” with the goal of “influencing or affecting the vote on any question submitted to the voters,” could not be upheld, since “speech that otherwise would be within the protection of the First Amendment” does not “lose that protection simply because its source is a corporation.”

In *Buckley v. Valeo*, a federal law limiting direct campaign contributions was upheld. However, those portions prohibiting candidates from spending their own money on advertisements, were struck down, since they were “direct and substantial restraints on the quantity of political speech.” What is consistently shown is that corporate spending to persuade voters was routinely recognized as covered by first amendment guarantees to free speech.

Things changed in 1990, however, with *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce*, where the “post-Austin” precedent restricting the speech of corporations was first outlined. The Court upheld the Michigan Campaign Finance Act, which prohibited the same type expenditures discussed above, reasoning that corporations’ advantages “in the accumulation of assets” necessitate “regulation of their political expenditures to avoid corruption or the appearance of corruption.” The states’ interest in preventing corruption was deemed compelling enough to curb free speech rights. The most recent major case in this line was *McConnell v. Federal Election Commission* (2003), which clearly echoed Austin: “The governmental interest underlying §323(a)—preventing the actual or apparent corruption of federal candidates and officeholders—constitutes a sufficiently important interest to justify contribution limits.” These more recent (and thus controlling) cases provided a precedential basis

for upholding the spending bans.

The Corporation as Actor and Freedom of Speech

In order to have a complete view of the controversy over corporate personhood and rights to freedom of speech, it is useful to consider precisely what a corporation is and what is meant by corporate “personhood.” A corporation is defined, in a strict, fairly didactic sense, as “a legal entity created through the laws of its State of incorporation,” in which the organization is endowed with an identity distinct from the association of individual members who make it up and the shareholders who own it. This distinct legal identity makes up the sum

“A corporation, in this sense, is treated as a person in a limited set of interactions – being able, for instance, to enter into contracts, bring lawsuits against a party or be sued, or to own property. It is also worth mentioning the variety of those entities classified under the title corporations.”

of what is called legal “personhood.” A corporation, in this sense, is treated as a person in a limited set of interactions – being able, for instance, to enter into contracts, bring lawsuits against a party or be sued, or to own property. It

is also worth mentioning the variety of those entities classified under the title corporations. Corporations are not all Fortune 500-style organizations. The classification also includes smaller collections of people, not limited to small businesses, churches, charitable organizations, and nonprofit political advocacy groups – such as the plaintiffs in this case.

Do corporations have a right to free speech? One of the most common critiques of the Citizens United decision relies on the misconception that corporations are extended the right to free speech because the court suddenly decided to treat them as legal “persons.” The first difficulty for those answering in the negative is the text of the first amendment itself: “Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech.” The key point taken from this text is that it does not endow freedom of speech upon any person or association. It does not say that individuals or even persons, either in the colloquial or legal sense, have the right to freedom of speech. Rather, it outlines a prohibition on a certain government action – “Congress shall make no law” and makes no qualification with respect to object. It does not matter if Congress attempts to regulate a person or any other entity, if the act itself is fundamentally unconstitutional. It would seem, therefore, that a more proper question would not be “do corporations have the right to free speech,” but does the government have the right to suppress speech rights at all? The plain meaning

of the constitution suggests that it does not.

One might object, however, that the government has an interest in protecting the integrity of the electoral process that is so great that some abridgement of the First Amendment might be necessary. When it comes to rights explicitly protected by the constitution, the burden to prove this necessity is a heavy one which falls upon the government – meeting strict scrutiny. The highest form of scrutiny a law must meet, this principle mandates that the law must further “a compelling governmental interest,” and must be “narrowly tailored” to meet this interest. The argument generally made for limiting corporate speech is the potential that corporate bodies, with their access to large sums of money, might drown out other voices in the marketplace of ideas. As the Federal Communication Commission argued in their supplemental brief, the ability of corporations to fund political advertisements “is inherently likely to corrode the political system, both by actually corrupting public office holders and by creating the appearance of corruption.”

However, this reasoning cannot convincingly satisfy strict scrutiny. First, while the government may have an interest in protecting our political system from corruption, it is not clear that paying for advertisements is always, or even ever, a manifestation of such corruption. The argument that corporations would have an undue influence on elections on account of their larger financial resources in turn suggests that, to some extent, the equality of speech is an important value that government must protect, and that candidates are somehow entitled to a forum in which to promote their ideas. The first amendment may guarantee a right to speak freely, but what the constitution clearly does not guarantee is an equal right for all to an audience.

Even more troubling is the idea that speech can be regulated on the appearance of corruption, not on its actual existence in fact. In no other area of law is it permissible for rights to be abridged on the appearance of misconduct. One cannot be charged with a crime or punished on a mere suspicion of illegal activity, but it must be clearly proven in a court of law.

The means the government used to justify the law were by no means narrow either. Recall that corporations are not only large firms like Exxon Mobile or Goldman Sachs. Nonprofit political or advocacy organizations, from the Sierra Club or the Children’s Defense Fund, are “corporations” whose primary reason for existence is to advocate causes which require political speech, may be deprived of their rights as well. In addition, media corporations, including MSNBC, Fox News, the New York Times, or the Wall Street Journal engage in political speech. The effect of the law, in practice, is that any one of these groups could be censored under a vague definition of “influence.” Instead of being narrowly

tailored to prevent corruption, such regulations touch on many traditionally protected types of speech and speakers.

Is Money Speech?

Even if the government does not have the right to censor speech based on the identity of the speaker, the question of whether financial expenditures can be considered an expression of speech remains. At first glance, money might be seen as merely a type of property. This is true, but money is necessary to engage in certain forms of speech. Political advertisements, be they in newspapers, billboards, radio programs, or television commercials, all cost money to produce and to air. To forbid or limit the amount of money one can spend on advertising necessarily limits freedom of speech. As political and legal commentator Glenn Greenwald forcefully argued in the aftermath of the *Citizens United v. FEC* decision:

Anyone who believes [money is not speech] would have to say that there’s no First Amendment problem with any law that restricts the spending of money for political purposes, such as: ‘It shall be illegal for anyone to spend money to criticize laws enacted by the Congress; all citizens shall still be free to express their views on such laws, provided no money is spent; It shall be illegal for anyone to spend money promoting a candidate not registered with either the Democratic or Republican Party; all citizens shall still be free to advocate for such candidates, provided no money is spent.

The act of spending money to disseminate one’s speech cannot be separated from free speech rights.

One might respond that freedom of speech is meaningless if one cannot financially afford a platform through which to advocate one’s ideas, and there is certainly some degree of truth to this claim. Yet, there are a variety of mediums through which one can engage in political advocacy, which have either low or nonexistent barriers to entry, democratizing speech. With the expansion of the internet in the 21st century, blogs, which can be obtained for free, offer a popular platform for engaging the world in discussion and promoting ideas. Social networking sites, including Facebook and MySpace, are also widely used mediums for communication. Even traditional methods, such as public protests and demonstrations, are available for the truly passionate. However, an inequity in the effectiveness of venues for speech due to a lack of financial resources is not an argument for the suppression of the speech of others. As Justice Kennedy stated in his *McConnell* dissent “The civic discourse belongs to

the people, and the Government may not prescribe the means used to conduct it.”

Conclusion

This First Amendment protection of speech is an unqualified prohibition on a particular type of governmental action. It follows that the government has no right to forbid anyone, even corporations, from engaging in political speech. Furthermore, the nature of speech in private markets requires that money be used in order to acquire a forum in which to speak.

While I've dealt primarily with the legal and doctrinal questions surrounding *Citizens United*, there is some uncertainty surrounding the practical effects of

the Supreme Court's decision. Will the airwaves now be flooded with mudslinging, highly-charged partisan advertisements bankrolled by Wall Street? No one knows for sure, but an insight provided by Michael Jordan on why he does not campaign on political issues might be applicable: "Republicans buy sneakers too." So long as the business class must rely upon consumers for their livelihood, I suspect that it is unlikely that they will alienate customers by actively campaigning on controversial issues. However for those companies that choose to, along with sundry nonprofit organizations and political advocacy "corporations" that choose to, the Supreme Court has struck a blow in defense of free speech. **Q**

Finding a Winning Counterinsurgency Strategy

How the Iraq Surge worked

By Andrew Peters

On March 23, 2003, America began the invasion of Iraq. What was supposed to be a quick and decisive victory eventually turned into one of the longest wars in American history. By March of 2006, it was so clear that the war was being planned wrongly that six former generals who had served in the Iraq theatre were calling for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's resignation. On November 8, 2006, President George W. Bush acknowledged some mishandling when he announced the appointment of Robert Gates saying, "He'll provide the department with a fresh perspective and new ideas on how America can achieve our goals in Iraq."

However, a new perspective on counterinsurgency strategies had already taken hold in many parts of

the Defense Department. One part of this new counterinsurgency doctrine was an "Awakening Movement" which began when tribes turned to the United States for economic and military assistance to fight the terrorists and install law and order back. This strategy incorporated cultural and economic incentives as a way to bring the country on the side of the Americans. It paid salaries to militias to work for the government as part of the "Sons of Iraq." Tribal leaders (sheiks) were given economic incentives to join the American cause and turn against the extremists in Iraq. These incentives drastically improved the situation in Iraq almost instantaneously. As the United States created incentive structures that led tribal Sheiks to ally with the coalition forces, al Qaeda was abandoned by their local support and became incapable of fighting coalition forces effectively.

As security improved in Iraq, President Bush and Secretary Gates announced a "surge" of 20,000 troops to be sent to the country to clamp down on the insurgency

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in early 2007. Between January of 2007 and January of 2008, American casualties decreased 54 percent. Over the next year they decreased another 60 percent. As a result of the surge and local support, the economy of Iraq picked up and the government and civil services started functioning again. This article will look at the historical record and find the reasons for these results, specifically focusing on Anbar Province where the awakening and troop surge were particularly important.

The first attempt at an alliance between a sheik and the United States in early 2005 did not go very well. Sheik Fasal al Gaood came to the American Military early that year with a proposition: let the members of his tribe help rout al Qaeda in the city of Qa'im on the Syrian border. McClatchy Newspapers surmised that this was likely a way to get patronage jobs for his tribesman. It also would have given him and his tribe an opportunity to stop foreign fighters from entering Iraq from Syria, thus giving him more opportunities for the black market activities that enriched these tribes in the pre-occupation years. Unfortunately, despite the great potential of a US-tribal alliance, the battle at Qa'im, known as Operation Matador, was a failure. The offensive was uncoordinated, and many Marines appear not to have even known about the alliance. They destroyed large, friendly sections of Qa'im and alienated many civilians. It would take more than a year before a successful alliance was formed in Anbar in September 2006, when al Gaood and others joined forces, creating the Anbar Salvation Council. Sadly, because of his efforts to help the United States, al Gaood was assassinated by al Qaeda in June 2007. McClatchy wrote in his obituary, "Whether he was an opportunist eager for the rewards of American friendship, a patriot dedicated to cleansing al Qaeda from his area or both, al Gaood didn't abandon his tribal strategy for restoring calm to Anbar."

A more successful attempt occurred in 2006 when Col. Sean MacFarland was sent to Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province. By this time Ramadi was a hotbed of insurgency, and the United States had all but pulled out of the city, leaving Iraqi security forces to fight the battle themselves. Col. MacFarland refused to accept this and began to think about the city in a different way. He was the perfect commanding officer to forge an alliance between the United States and the tribes. He was lucky to be put in a city where a tribal sheik was also becoming tired of fighting al Qaeda. In September of 2006, Sheik Abdul Sattar Abu Risha was sick of al Qaeda and called a meeting of sheiks to discuss the matter. Over 50 showed up. Col. MacFarland was at the meeting and later equated it to July 4, 1776 when the United States declared their

independence from England. The Awakening Movement was essentially founded at this meeting and a decrease in violence soon followed.

Sheik Abdul Sattar Abu Risha was a Sheik of the Dulaimi tribe in Ramadi. However, he did not have purely altruistic reasons for allying with the United States. "Sattar himself was a smuggler and highway robber, and a fairly minor sheikh...Sattar had previously been willing to work with al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, but began to clash with the group as it muscled on his illegal revenue." The Washington Post says that many regarded him as a "warlord and a highway bandit, an oil smuggler and an opportunist." It also points out that Abu Risha was likely allied with al Qaeda in the early years of the war until that became bad for business. Despite his personal flaws and previous business interests, "Sattar and his new alliance were soon supported by the coalition. The US military helped to protect Sattar, and the government of Iraq embraced him, albeit reluctantly, as well. Sattar eventually was made the counterinsurgency coordinator for the province, his tribesmen joined the Iraqi Police around Ramadi in droves, and his militias were formally deputized as 'Emergency Response Units'. A blind eye was turned to Sattar's extralegal revenue generation."

If Sheik Sattar was the Iraqi face of the Anbar Awakening, then Col. Sean MacFarland of the US Army was the American face. In the March-April 2008 edition of *Military Review*

“In Anbar, the Americans accepted that in order to have the Sheiks provide security, they would have to be compensated with rewards and prestige.”

Col. MacFarland and Maj. Niel Smith wrote an article titled, "Anbar Awakening: The Tipping Point" which gives their account of what led to the success of the movement. It begins by acknowledging that, "When we arrived in Ramadi in June 2006, few of us thought our campaign would change the entire complexion of the war and push al Qaeda to the brink of defeat in Iraq." However, they did just that by creating relationships with Sheiks such as Sattar who could provide police forces and pacify the population. MacFarland and his group understood the tribal relations within Anbar. They did not overstep their boundaries or do anything to antagonize the powerful sheiks whose support they desperately needed. MacFarland writes, "We designed our information operations (IO) efforts to alienate the people from the insurgents while increasing the prestige of supportive tribal leaders. We also made friendly Sheiks the conduits for humanitarian aid efforts, such as free fuel disbursements. Wherever we established improved security, we established civil military operations centers (CMOCs) and began the process of restoring services to the area" This was very different to the previous counterinsurgency strategies that often were undermined

by disturbing the hierarchical culture and alienating powerful sheiks. In Anbar, the Americans accepted that in order to have the Sheiks provide security, they would have to be compensated with rewards and prestige.

The main goal of the awakening in Anbar was to encourage the sheiks to build a local police force known as the Sons of Iraq (SOI). A police force and national army are very different things. A police force is recruited from the neighborhoods they are going to patrol and shares the same culture and values and the residents. To recruit police from the locals it was necessary that the local sheiks received something in return. MacFarland goes on, "Our desire to recruit local Iraqis into the IP (Iraqi Police) was the catalyst for the Awakening movement's birth in September 2006...In the bargain, the Government of Iraq would assume the burden of paying their tribesmen to provide for their security. The situation was a winner any way you looked at it. The tribes soon saw that instead of being the hunted, they could become the hunters, with well trained, paid, and equipped security forces backed up by locally positioned coalition forces."

By 2007, the coalition and central government was pouring millions of dollars in to Anbar for reconstruction and security projects that Abu Risha oversaw in his new position as counterinsurgency coordinator for the province. After almost four years of an insurgency, the population started supporting the security forces. Carter Malkasian, a military adviser on security forces in Anbar, points out, "In return for backing the police, the Iraqi government gave local Sunni leaders greater military, economic, and political power. Doing so was a necessary step in inducing Sunni leaders to support the police, and it enabled those leaders to get more members of their community to join the police and stand against AQI. In Ramadi, Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki backed Sittar and openly met with the leaders of his tribal movement. The government effectively granted Sittar economic power by turning a blind eye when he regained control of criminal activity along the highways near Ramadi, which AQI had disturbed. At the end of October 2006, the Ministry of the Interior granted Sittar authority over security in Al Anbar and permitted his movement to create three "emergency" battalions, totaling 2,250 men. This was a huge concession. For all intents and purposes, the government was permitting Sittar and his movement to have their own militia. These three emergency battalions were particularly useful for Sattar. It gave him a patronage army by allowing him to employ people who were illiterate, underage, or overweight and thus ineligible for other forces. MacFarland says that the most frequent disqualifier for service in the police was illiteracy. These battalions gave them a chance to serve with their tribesmen. By November 2006, just two months after the

Awakenings first meeting, there were nearly 3,000 men in the police, in training, or on awaiting shipment. This was thirty times the number just six months earlier in May. They were paid a salary of about \$300 a month, leading to positive economic benefits for the entire community. It should be noted that in exchange for providing these police forces, Sheiks took a commission of their salaries sometimes as much as 20 percent. But that is a price of doing business in Anbar.

As expected, the police were much more effective at fighting the insurgency than the Army. In the January-February 2010 issue of *Military Review*, Col. Anthony Deane, who served in Iraq, listed some of the many advantages. "Police recruiting could quickly provide success on a number of lines of effort. First, we would increase the economic development by providing respectable jobs to young men, thereby lessening the likelihood of Al-Qaeda paying them to attack coalition forces. Second, we would build the government's legitimacy by having the government pay the Iraqi Police salaries, making the populace less likely to dismiss the government as unrepresentative. Third, we would improve security by having buy-in of the local population in their own security. The locals knew who belonged in their area and who was doing harm to the coalition. They could identify the enemy when U.S. forces were simply incapable of doing so..." Col. MacFarland gave even more reasons, "Our ISF [Iraqi Security Forces] cell understood the importance of paying the new police to prove that they were respected and their service valued. As a collateral benefit, the growing IP [Iraqi Police] force also created a small engine for economic development by providing jobs in addition to security for the local community." The Iraqi police were also able to gain valuable intelligence because of their local connections and relationships in the community. They were also much more knowledgeable about the neighborhood which gave them an advantage over al Qaeda. Because Anbar society is so tight knit and the geography is so challenging al Qaeda needed this local support to prosper. One Sheik summarized this logic at a meeting of a tribal alliance he took the microphone and announced, "If it was not for the coyotes among us, no one would have been killed, kidnapped, or bombed. You know who among you brought the Yemeni with the suicide vest."

The awakening had such a good first year that in September 2007, the central government pledged \$70 million for rapid economic reconstruction and \$50 million in compensation for destroyed housing in Anbar Province. 6,000 new civilian jobs were approved for the province as well. In addition, the government promised to reopen an oil refinery, accelerate the building of an electric plant and create two free-trade zones on Anbar's border with Syria and Jordan. In late 2007 the Army

announced the Sons of Iraq program was going so well that they wanted to expand it by about 10,000 people before they turned over the program to the Iraqis in 2008. The Sons of Iraq could not muster about 100,000 people. For 2008, the United States also contributed about \$150 million to sponsor tribal proxies. It is no surprise that as money and police poured into the province, the violence continued to plummet.

It is unclear exactly how the Sons of Iraq will impact Iraq's future stability. Before the March 2010 elections, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki made Iraq's security a key plank in his platform. To this end, money was allocated to pay the salaries and find job placement for all of the former SOI members, which the government says totals 96,000 people. As of January 2010, almost 50,000 of them had been integrated permanently into the government. 15,000 had joined security forces such as the police and army, and 33,000 had found work in other government ministries.

To complement the awakening, a surge in troop levels was devised to protect the sheiks and destroy the remnants of al Qaeda. In January 2007, President Bush announced the troop surge in Iraq. On January 23rd in his State of the Union Address the President specifically alluded to Anbar when promoting the surge saying, "We're carrying out a new strategy in Iraq...we're deploying reinforcements of more than 20,000 additional soldiers and Marines to Iraq. The vast majority will go to Baghdad, where they will help Iraqi forces to clear and secure neighborhoods, and serve as advisers embedded in Iraqi army units. With Iraqis in the lead, our forces will help secure the city by chasing down terrorists, insurgents and the roaming death squads. And, in Anbar province -- where Al Qaida terrorists have gathered and local forces have begun showing a willingness to fight them -- we are sending an additional 4,000 United States Marines, with orders to find the terrorists and clear them out." These extra troops allowed the United States to enter cities that they had all but abandoned. Weapons stashes were found at accelerated rates. This meant there were fewer weapons for al Qaeda and made the cities and security forces safer. Most importantly, people were able to take their cities

back from the terrorists.

By the fall of 2007, violence was down to 20 percent of what it had been a year earlier in some areas. A Department of Defense Press Release in July 2007 states, "The security situation in Anbar province has greatly improved in recent months, thanks to additional U.S. troops provided by the surge and the growing presence of trained and vetted Iraqi soldiers and police... Statistics show that daily insurgent-generated violence, as measured by small-arms, mortar and improvised-explosive-device attacks, has decreased in Anbar since this time last year..."

As of April 2010, Anbar is one of the safest provinces in Iraq. In the third quarter of last year there was an average of just over 1 attack a day. But the decrease in violence is useless unless it is accompanied by political stability. Al Qaeda still operates and the threat of sectarian violence is still very real. But the March 2010 national elections give hope for the future. The two leading party lists, Allawi's nonsectarian alliance and al-Maliki's Shiite Party of State, both denounce sectarianism

"By the fall of 2007, violence was down to 20 percent of what it had been a year earlier in some areas."

and claim to represent Iraqi nationalism. Additionally, lists that were associated with sectarianism, Iran, or American interests did

poorly. The elections did have problems, however, such as allegations of former Ba'athists on Allawi's list and voter fraud by al-Maliki's list. However, violence has not increased yet as a result of the election which is cause for hope.

President Barack Obama campaigned on the promise of withdrawing troops from Iraq. This plan is behind schedule, but will be starting soon. This spring, 10,000 troops are supposed to leave the country every month for five months, halving America's military presence. The remainder should leave the country in 2011. After that deadline, Iraq's security and political future will be up to them. In 2007 when Iraq was preparing to take over the Sons of Iraq program, government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said of national security, "It is an Iraqi responsibility, this is the right thing to do, it is not an American responsibility." Indeed, Iraq is now the Iraqi's responsibility. We can only hope our strategies over the last couple years have left the country stable enough to have a promising future. ♣

The Possibility of Conservative Populism

What Willmoore Kendall would think of the Tea Party

By Jeremy Rozansky

In a short year, the Tea Party has rapidly eliminated the Right's inertia and become the single greatest object of the Left's scorn. Even with all the attention, the assessments have too often betrayed their authors' conceits. One reason for this is that only in the last month or so have comprehensive polls examined its demographics and ideological idiosyncrasies, the other reason is that so few assessments ask the fundamental questions: Is the Tea Party a faction of the American conservative movement? Is this seeming conservative populism even possible?

The Tea Party is not going away any time soon and nor are these questions. In fact, the Tea Party's numbers are increasing: Rasmussen found that the 16% of Americans who identified as a part of the Tea Party movement in March of 2010 rose to 24% in April. They grew as a response to the national agenda: Stimulus, Omnibus, Cap-and-Trade, and Obamacare. The agenda they oppose is the same agenda that has also been nearly unanimously opposed by the Republican Party and by conservatives. *National Review*, the chief artery of American conservatism, has live-blogged Tea Party rallies, defended its moniker from the lewd and inane "teabagger," and mused extensively, and largely sympathetically, about what the Tea Party means. That *National Review* would make its website a forum in defense of the Tea Party is one of the clearest indications that conservatives believe the Tea Party to be an important ally, if not just a quirky

branch of American conservatism.

Bedfellowship alone does not make the Tea Party conservative. It remains an open question whether the Tea Party can be considered conservative—whether any populist movement is legitimately conservative. However, a measured reflection on the Tea Party and the possibility of conservative populism lends itself to the conclusion that we are witnessing a new kind of populism: a conservative populism that takes up the paradoxical aim of using the power of the people to delimit the power of the people.

With his first glance at the Tea Party, the conservative should recoil. Conservatives understand that democratic rule must be tempered by religious or aristocratic traditions. Albert Jay Nock, an early conservative, spoke of a "Remnant" of educated men who would understand the proper role of the state in society and would be needed at the disastrous end of the West's course toward collectivism and mass-culture. Jose Ortega y Gasset, another influential conservative, scolded the barbarism of the mass-man and urged the noble life, not the common life. The list could continue.

Anti-populism, or elitism, is basic ground for conservatives. In *The Conservative Mind*, his canonical, yet flawed book, Russell Kirk cites as the third of the six principles of conservatism,

Conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes, as against the notion of a 'classless society.' With reason, conservatives have often been 'the party of order.' If natural distinctions are effaced among men, oligarchs fill the vacuum. Ultimate equality in

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the judgment of God, and equality before courts of law, are recognized by conservatives; but equality of condition, they think, means equality in servitude and boredom.”

Conservatives believe in natural aristocracy. Different conservatives have had different conceptions of the natural aristocracy. As Kirk tells it, John Adams believed a natural aristocracy comes about through republican governance. As individuals select their representatives, they look to give power to those who are the best among them. Many conservatives have supported traditional aristocracy in some form as an institution that also offers the cultivation and preservation of society’s best. Whether for the valiant or the just men, conservatives have supported forms that harness natural inequalities. Popular collectivism is opposed, in part, because the basis for collectivism is generally social leveling. To continue his project, the collectivist must smooth the natural differences among men—a level of power that could enslave each man.

Most of all, conservatives believe in the wisdom of traditional social forms. They also find truth in Tocqueville’s assessment that, more than any other regime, democratic man disdains traditions. This tradition-slackening democratic man grabs power through popular movements like the Tea Party; it is no mistake that, for Aristotle, mob rule is the corrupt parallel of the constitutional republic. But could there be a popular movement of democratic men in favor of traditional forms and other conservative things? This is where Willmoore Kendall comes in.

When he worked at *National Review*, it was said that Willmoore Kendall was never on speaking terms with more than one editor at a time. The inspiration for Saul Bellow’s “Mosby’s Memoirs,” Kendall was one of the larger-than-life characters of the early postwar right, and a salty one at that. The son of a blind Methodist minister in Konowa, Oklahoma, Kendall became a Rhodes Scholar at age 23, after his first book, on baseball, was published. Originally a Trotskyist and a supporter of the Spanish Republic in the Spanish Civil War, he became disillusioned with communism while in Spain. Stateside, he obtained a PhD in political science. His dissertation was on Locke’s popular majoritarianism—a view that would evolve with Kendall. He eventually attained tenure at Yale and, after his tenure was bought-out by put-off

colleagues, he joined William F. Buckley Jr., his former student, at a start-up publication, *National Review*.

Described by Leo Strauss as America’s “best native theorist,” Kendall propounded, as he termed it, “egghead McCarthyism”—an admittedly strange term. Certainly a demagogue if not also a populist, Senator McCarthy drew the ire of intellectual conservatives like Whittaker Chambers who said of McCarthy, “He can’t think. He is a slugger and a rabble-rouser” who “simply knows that somebody threw a tomato and the general direction from which it came.” Kendall saw McCarthy as inarticulate and rude and also as a vestibule for a fundamental conflict over the nature of American democracy, in which McCarthy was in the right.

That Willmoore Kendall was not put off by the inarticulate and rude (traits which can certainly be attributed to elements of the Tea Party) is the larger point. One reason for his tolerance is that he was from the area between the Appalachians and the Rockies and had a certain sense about his people’s basic intention. Kendall did not have Kirk’s absolute reverence for

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Burke, nor Chambers’ dismay at the crude machinations of majority rule. He did not want to co-opt the *ancien regime* for the American sphere, and took up a project to identify the traditional elements of American politics.

As George H. Nash assumes, while most conservatives were unsettled by the possibility of the popular and democratically legitimate abandonment of the truths we hold, Kendall was satisfied by a faith in the American people. These people, the people of Konowa, Oklahoma were “virtuous people.” The Great Tradition of Western political thought—vaguely described as the notion that there exist fundamental political and personal duties alongside rights—was instilled within Americans at large. According to him, the American people had the Great Tradition—“in their hips.”

Because of all this, Kendall did not yearn for a more aristocratic age. His projects focused on the democratic elements of the American founding. In one project, Kendall took efforts to examine the symbols of American politics put forth in *The Federalist Papers*. *The Federalist*, he argues, refuses to accede to the modern, liberal majoritarianism in which, as Jefferson put it, “democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one percent of the people rule the other forty-nine.” Such a conception makes political life about winners and

losers, in which the economic and social levelers achieve fifty-one percent and impose institutional changes on the other forty-nine. Instead, Kendall quoted Publius in *Federalist 85*:

I never expect to see a perfect work from imperfect man. The result of the *deliberations* of all collective bodies must necessarily be a *compound*, as well of the errors and prejudices, as of the good sense and wisdom, of the individuals of whom they are composed...: [A] common bond of amity and union, must as necessarily be a *compromise of* as many dissimilar interests and inclinations. How can perfection spring from such materials?

This does not enunciate the conceit that if reasonable men discussed policy civilly then they could find the midpoint where the true solutions to political problems lie. Rather it expresses contentment with imperfection and tension and conceives of democratic governance as fundamentally accommodating; no side overpowers the other because neither side is so invasive. Bicameralism, the filibuster, the Electoral College, and the congressional seniority-principle all frustrate the majority and, as Kendall believed, would all be assented to by Publius. As Barack Obama has recently discovered, fifty-three percent is not a mandate for ambitious federal overhaul.

Populism is defined by the basic idea that the people are better than their government. The necessary conclusion of this is that people should have more political power either in influence on policy decisions or in more fundamental ways—like amending the Constitution to expand direct democracy. The exemplary American populist, William Jennings Bryan reflected this malleability of the populist label well with his 1908 slogan “Shall the People Rule?” Bryan’s slogan attacked both the undemocratic process that designated Taft as the Republican candidate and what he believed to be the monopoly-favoring Republican administration.

Willmoore Kendall would agree that the people are often better than their government (he could be open to populist sentiment), but he would also caution against determining “the people” purely by majority-rule. Instead, conservative populism must combine modesty about what a populist movement can do with a fundamentally conservative inclination toward the Great Tradition. They must believe in duties alongside

rights. Without giving away the ending, the Tea Party fits the first half, and the second is still possible.

As a matter of organizing our assessment, one must realize that there are umpteen Tea Party organizations with different regional, sub-regional, and local chapters. They go by names like “Tea Party Patriots,” “The Tea Party Express,” “Tea Party Nation,” and “Tax Day Tea Party.” They have no chief figure. Sarah Palin, who recently spoke at the National Tea Party Convention (put on by Tea Party Nation), might be imagined to be this chief figure of the Tea Party, but a recent New York Times poll found a plurality of Tea Party attendees do not think Governor Palin is even qualified to be President, let alone would support a bid. Other recent populist movements have coalesced around charismatic political figures, whether they be Ross Perot or Barack Obama, but the Tea Party appear to be the first significant populist movement arising without a leader since the anti-Vietnam War movement and the New Left. In many ways the Tea Party embodies the populist ideal: loosely structured, sporadic, and without obvious leadership.

Any movement is united by either interest or principle. It is not, on the surface, clear which unites the Tea Party. Tea Party activists tend to be better educated, slightly wealthier, and older than the average American. It is possible they may have common interests—although why the elderly would be more inclined than the young to protest against accelerating debt is not clear. More likely, they are united by principle. Their speeches, signs, rallying cries, symbols, and objects of opposition clearly stem from certain basic ideas and principles.

The Tea Party movement can trace its origin to what has been dubbed, “The Rant Heard ‘Round The World” made by Rick Santelli, a CNBC reporter at the Chicago Board of Trade. To the hurrahs of traders, Santelli proclaimed that there is a “silent majority” that is skeptical of stimulus economics and opposes “promoting bad behavior” through corporate bailouts and, in the specific instance, federal

mortgage refinancing. While talk of a populist opposition had been brewing among traders and talk-radio hosts before the Santelli rant, the rant helped unite the factions around a single image: the Sons of Liberty plunging the newly taxed tea into Boston Harbor.

In American lore, the revolutionaries protested at



Willmoore Kendall, from *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, Since 1945* by George H. Nash

Boston Harbor against “taxation without representation.” The contemporary Tea Party opposes spending bills and the concomitant prospect of higher taxation put forward by *legitimate* representatives. Although some regard Barack Obama as illegitimate, largely for unfounded suspicions about his birthplace, they make up a very small and overexposed minority. Most Tea Party members do not regard the system as illegitimate, only as corrupt and poorly guided. But the “taxation without representation” line was not the sole case for the Boston Tea Party. The Tea Act would, among other things, secure a monopoly for the British East India Company, squeezing colonial smugglers out of the market. Part of the motivation for the Boston Tea Party was to oppose the steady centralization of power that is intrinsically paired with the suppression of personal liberties within the marketplace.

The same motivation underlies much of the Tea Party. The Tea Party Patriots, for example, cite “fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free markets” as their core values. Their justifications, however, tell a more complete tale. Fiscal responsibility is valued because high taxes lessen the freedom of the individual to spend his earnings and high government spending inevitably means high taxes. Their belief in constitutionally limited government is justified by a basic faith in the correctness of the founders’ original intent, with an explicit reference to less-centralized federalism and a general deference toward personal liberty. Free markets are supported as the “consequence of personal liberty.” These ideas all originate in a basic libertarianism.

One must pause to deflect a misleading comparison; the Tea Party, unlike the Libertarian Party, articulates few practicable political ends. They articulate that the debt should decrease, taxes should be lowered, government functions should be narrowed, and that bailouts are corrupt. These demands call for a shift in the policy-making disposition, but they do not make up a comprehensive policy platform.

This policy-making disposition they call for is the same basic libertarianism. In his surprisingly affectionate account of the Nashville Tea Party Convention, Jonathan Raban of the *New York Review of Books* confirmed much of what the polls have said: the Tea Party is made up of those who are, on average, better off than the nation at large. Moreover, there are a striking number of political novices who are finding the Tea Party as the first modern political movement that speaks for them. But, ideologically they are hard to group. At the Nashville Convention, Glenn Beck’s books were passed around, a birther spoke

(and was shouted down), Randians were certainly in attendance, and “Obama spends—Jesus saves” was a popular shirt. There were nightly benedictions offered by, among others, Christian Zionists. Raban also found some moderates, shyly put off by the sloganeering, even as others found it to be good, political fun. Only in a big tent could one find the Randians, fiercely atheist, rubbing elbows with evangelicals. Only a normal political movement has the gradient from kook to moderate.

While contemporary libertarianism is explicit in its policy preferences, the Tea Party is composed of an ideologically wider mix, based on simple notions about the dangers of an expanding government. Although it represents an unprecedented composition of ideologies and influences, the Tea Party seems to contain two of the three basic elements of the conservatives’ coalition: social and fiscal conservatives (attendants might also be national security conservatives—but that doesn’t come up as much).

Not only is there overlap between the Tea Party and the conservatives, over 75% of the Tea Party self-identify as conservative. But one still must hesitate to call them conservative. They do not measure as the Republican base: 40% of Tea Party believe *Roe v. Wade* was decided correctly, 57% are in favor of gay marriage or civil unions, and only 30% support the relaxing of gun control laws. While these numbers mark the Tea Party as more conservative than the nation at large, they are not the most conservative conservatives. One must conclude that the Tea Party is neither the Republican base nor a political movement separated from the conservatives. Instead, they are a dynamic swath of anti-Obama America loosely united by a belief that government expansion suppresses personal liberty.

David Brooks has compared the Tea Party to the 1960’s New Left, citing their anti-elitism, rally tactics, conspiracy theories, and elemental feelings against the establishment. This comparison deserves examination. Harvey Mansfield in his foray into contemporary political surveys, *America’s Constitutional Soul*, notes that the New Left’s demonstrations were never about reasons but about feelings—they were not logical republican actors, they were, rather, emotive democratic masses. The Tea Party is a similarly emotive democratic masses. Yet the New Left’s “participatory democracy” was about increasing the power of the people so that government would be, to paraphrase a Carter slogan, as good as the people. To make government as good as the people means not only to increase the presence of popular will in decision making but to increase the purview of government. For

“Only in a big tent could one find the Randians, fiercely atheist, rubbing elbows with evangelicals. Only a normal political movement has the gradient from kook to moderate.”

government to be subservient to the people's will—a will which was concerned with all aspects of national life—government could not be delimited; after all, the people's will was sovereign and, as such, had no permanent delimitation. New regulations for the environment, for instance, were supported by the New Left so that private institutions could become democratically accountable.

The conservative's problem with the New Left might be that they were an emotive democratic mass, but that was never Kendall's problem. Kendall had a problem with the attempt to expand the power of the majority in American life and uncompromisingly assimilate more and more institutions under the banner of "participatory democracy." It was a corruption of American democracy to do so. If the Tea Party is seeking to undo the New Left by employing a basic libertarianism in governance then they are reviving American democracy as Kendall understood it. They meet Kendall's understanding of conservative populism insofar as they are a populist movement seeking to delimit the power of all populist forces.

Yet, Kendall was certainly hostile to those with "near-neurosis about government power... and the cult of the weak government" and he would not have supported many of the ideologies present at the Tea Party. The purpose of the conservative who follows *Federalist 85* is not to frustrate government per se but to frustrate the levelers when the levelers became the majority. Kendall would probably see the Tea Party for their dual possibilities.

On the one hand, the Tea Party's ranks could be the "virtuous people" who inspired his faith in the American system. They are, even inelegantly, articulating something profound about the role of the individual in American political life and deserve accommodation by the liberal classes. Through this articulation, the Tea Party members could be an electoral force, a new majority modest in its aims. The Tea Party could roll back the New Left's participatory democracy and shrink the size of government. In believing that the people are better than their government, it would not take the tact that the control of the people over national life must be expanded via government. Rather, the Tea Party would understand how government power frustrates the individual and let the people be better than its government by involving government less in the people's lives. The Tea Party

could become a populism that diminishes the ability of other populist movements to change national life via government.

On the other hand, the Tea Party could be a majority in waiting. It could be ready to slash the accumulated social fabric of the entitlement age and resist accommodating the liberals it usurped. It would be unfortunate if a movement that proclaimed its constitutional seriousness was caught up in the temptation of absolute majority rule that other movements have fallen into. It would also be tragic if the Tea Party members failed to link up with the great tradition and proclaim the role for duties in political life.

Perhaps Kendall is right in his analysis but wrong in his conclusions. The *Federalist* sought compromise, accommodation, and harmony, but we are left in a world in which we are deeply divided on multiple issues on which accommodation is functionally impossible. The expansion of government as a leveling agent, for one, has made social policy universally felt. As was once the case with slavery, we need a way to overcome an impasse, and majority rule is certainly preferable to war. Our institutions are meant to protect against majority overreach and are, as such, fundamentally conservative. But rather than merely upholding these institutions, conservatives since the rise of the neoconservatives believe that through a conservative disposition we can improve upon what has been set up by liberal victories. The Tea Party is a transformed conservative populism for a transformed conservatism. Conservatives are now advocates of a new order which seeks to unseat the liberal order that through its own policies has necessitated, coincidentally, the new majoritarian populism of the right.

What is conservative about the Tea Party is that they are the populism delimiting the power of the people. To fully claim the conservative mantle, they need to be about more than personal liberties. They must, even ineloquently, enunciate the Great Tradition as Kendall called it. They need to articulate duties. The Tea Party, if one has correctly calibrated expectations of populist movements, is off to a half-way decent start: they hold-up thrift and responsibility as duties for politicians and homebuyers. While the conservatism of the Tea Party is not guaranteed, let us learn from Willmoore Kendall and be optimistic, for the new populist upsurge may well have this Great Tradition "in their hips." **CP**

“What is conservative about the Tea Party is that they are the populism delimiting the power of the people.”

Freedom and the Absence of Arbitrary Force

A Response to “The Party of (No) Principle”
by Etan Heller

By Alastair Cleve

The commonest complaint from the objectivists is that the libertarian has no philosophy: that his approach is too haphazard and lacks unity. The commonest complaint from the neo-conservative is that the libertarian is hedonistic and pays too little attention to what binds us together as a nation. The commonest complaint from the leftist is that the libertarian ignores empirical economic realities and their subsequent power imbalances, which result in an unfair society. Despite these critiques, however, libertarianism is a uniquely unified philosophy: one that rests on a very simple maxim, *the absence of arbitrary force*.

These individuals often charge libertarians with subscribing to an incomplete philosophy: libertarians, they believe, pursue their own desires without regard to any larger principle. The particular focus of this review will be on the Objectivist complaint, as elucidated by Etan Heller in “The Party of (No) Principle” (Winter 2010). The Objectivist complaint primarily charges the libertarian with incoherency. The libertarian fails to describe a consistent, philosophical approach that accounts for when the government is and is not justified to act. However, through the course of this critique, it will become clear that libertarianism is enormously consistent. Rather than being, as Heller puts it, a disintegrated philosophy, libertarianism is rooted in natural rights philosophy and based on the simple maxim of the absence of arbitrary force.

Heller argues that libertarians lack a philosophy: their exuberance for what they want has led them astray

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of justifying why it is good that they should get what they want. Heller writes: “One must have an account of what ‘is’ (the nature of the world and of the human mind) to form an opinion of what ‘ought’ to be (ethics).” Libertarians acknowledge that man is driven to self-perpetuation—we might consider this a metaphysical law in libertarian thought—and that he will sacrifice all societally-accrued morality to achieve that end. Libertarians want to harness that selfish capacity; they do not want to tyrannize the population but to allow it to develop. Libertarians accept that there are good reasons to leave the State of Nature but that that departure does not recognize a complete abdication of self-sovereignty. As John Stuart Mill wrote: “Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.”

Thus, libertarianism is the ultimate philosophy of individualism. Libertarianism recognizes that individuals are ends in themselves. Objectivists attempt to connect a philosophy of individual rights to a philosophy of ethical egoism, thereby suggesting that the only opposition to socialism is greed and selfishness. The problem, as the libertarian philosopher Michael Huemer pointed out, is that individual rights and ethical egoism are incompatible, such that “I cannot hold my own well-being as the only end in itself, and simultaneously say that I recognize other persons as ends in themselves too.” In order to get around this, the objectivist must justify that “the right action is always the selfish action” and that “it is impossible to benefit from violating someone else’s rights.” Otherwise, Objectivism suffers from a contradiction: that my own well-being is the ultimate end but that I may use other individuals to achieve my own well-being despite the fact that other individuals are also ends. The libertarian, as Huemer pointed out, subscribes to a more consistent

“Libertarianism is the ultimate philosophy of individualism. Libertarianism recognizes that individuals are ends in themselves.”

defense of individual rights. “The more straightforward interpretation of the individualist premise” to which libertarians subscribe “is that I must recognize other individuals as ends in themselves, not mere means to my ends.”

The grandfather of liberalism, which is the ancestor to modern American libertarianism, was John Locke. Locke’s greatest contribution to political philosophy was his attack on arbitrary government. It was hardly reasonable, he suggested, that we leave the State of Nature with the intention of achieving the blessings of liberty so that they could be seized upon the will of the monarch. No man is inherently better than another, nor is there any such thing as the Platonic philosopher-kings. Such thought belongs to atavistic conceptions of Augustinian hierarchy. And it was with this mindset that a group of very learned men sat down and declared their separation from one of the most arbitrary governments of the nineteenth century. As Roger Pilon, of the Center for Constitutional Studies at the Cato Institute, pointed out: “We institute government, the Declaration says, to secure our rights—our natural rights and the rights we create as we live our lives. But the powers government may need to do that must be derived from our consent if they are to be just. Government is thus twice limited: by its end, which any of us would have a right to pursue were there no government; and by its means, which require our consent.”

Libertarians have axiomatized the notion that *all men are created equal* and that mettlesome preferences violate this axiom. Happiness for each man is different. A society which dares to tell each man what he should want, how he should want it, and when he should want it violates this axiom. As Isaiah Berlin pointed out in his inaugural speech at Oxford in 1958, “This monstrous impersonation, which consists in equating what X would choose if he were something he is not, or at least not yet, with what X actually seeks and chooses, is at the heart of all the political theories of self-realisation.” Therefore, the reason for the libertarian’s econocentrism is partly explained by his insistence of the price system’s morality. The second that an artificial bureaucracy attempts to dismantle the price system represents a great philosophical usurpation, for it requires that that bureaucracy know

what each person wants and how he should want it. That subjectivity amounts to arbitrariness, and arbitrariness is unjustifiable. Moreover, the libertarian objects to paternalistic protections based on the perceived objective needs of the population. Each man is different, and the attempt to make different men the same robs them of their right to make a choice, which is the ultimate act of self-sovereignty.

“The more the state ‘plans,’” wrote the Friedrich Hayek, “the more difficult planning becomes for the individual.” Just because a society attempts to remove the price system does not mean that budget constraints disappear or that resources become infinite. A second metaphysical reality for libertarians is that resources are finite and that those resources must be allocated. What is the most justified method of resource allocation? Libertarians respond that each man deserves what he can contractually receive and that anything below this is theft and that anything above this is charity. Often, what a man can contractually receive is what he can receive in monetary compensation in an open market. And if that market should be competitive—as is often the case—that man will likely receive compensation according to his marginal product of labor.

In rather grandiose language, Heller writes: “Many pro-liberty Enlightenment thinkers, such as John Locke and Frédéric Bastiat, were early misintegrated libertarians because they believed in natural rights—rights to life, liberty, property, the pursuit of happiness—and even went to great lengths to philosophically validate them, yet ultimately justified the rights of the individual as gifts from God, or described rights less directly as divinely justified.” Natural rights are a philosophical result of the libertarian’s conception of the State of the Nature: they are those rights that are irrefutable—they are the bedrock of libertarian thought. They are the rights that society cannot justifiably impede, for they allow the individual to pursue his individual good. And insofar as that is true, the libertarian can confidently say that murder is not a natural right, whereas property is.

Furthermore, the claim that libertarians are moral relativists hardly survives serious investigation. Moral relativism is an act of intellectual lethargy, for it deceives the individual’s intellectual resources by leading him

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down a path of non-discrimination in moral sentiments. As Allan Bloom pointed out, moral relativism is hardly compatible with the traditional conception of inalienable natural rights that have been the nucleus of American constitutionalism.

The philosophy of non-aggression—of letting individuals decide what is in their best interest—is not morally relativistic. It is morally definite, for it is philosophically derived: men, believes the libertarian, achieve their best when left to their own devices, provided that they do not harm others in the process, which would amount to a betrayal of contract law.

“Genius breathes freely in an atmosphere of freedom,” wrote John Stuart Mill. What Mill was advocating, and what libertarians advocate, is an ethical society *tolerant* of unethical behavior. It was beneficial, believed Mill, that society should have ethical norms that re-enforced behavior that produced positive externalities, such as marriage. This, however, did not confer a right to suppress unethical behavior, infidelity in this example. Since each man is his own sovereign, each man has the right to make an unethical decision, but that decision does not need to be upheld as a virtue by the community. Tolerance for unusual behavior allows for a dynamic society, and a dynamic society awakens human creativity—what Mill called genius.

The consequentialism that Heller decries is not libertarianism *per se* but an application of it. In the areas where government is philosophically justified to act, consequentialism is employed, for—as the libertarian sees it—if the government must act, we should try to minimize the externalities of that action, such as deadweight loss resulting from disincentives. To be sure, libertarians do use consequentialist arguments to buttress their natural-rights philosophy; however, it is important that the latter not be confused with the former. Though the libertarian will inform you that the legislated expansion of health

care insurance will not likely decrease disincentives to cost-conscious healthcare consumption and therefore will result in upwards pressure on prices, his fundamental objection to such legislation comes from his disgust for government mandates in areas for which government is not justified to act. To force someone to purchase insurance is to strip him of his sovereignty.

To review, libertarianism has all the components of a robust philosophy. Man leaves the State of Nature. He contracts a government with his peers. Though he sacrifices the privileges of the State of Nature, he maintains his natural rights. The maxim

of non-arbitrary force is derived from the axioms that we are all allowed to pursue our own destiny and that all men are created equal. Combined with the metaphysical laws that man is driven to self-perpetuation and that resources are finite, government is justified to act in those areas which violate man’s natural rights, for, if it failed to do so, government would violate its contractual obligations.

Despite his nice language, Heller betrays himself in the end: “The founding of the United States demonstrated this, to a certain extent—the philosophical ideals of the Enlightenment, although not perfect, were concretized politically *because* of the rational nature of the philosophy, and because the men who held them held them *explicitly* and *consistently*.” Libertarians are but the modern recipients of that robust American tradition—the tradition of the individual. And if the founding of the United States represented a great philosophical achievement, it can hardly be maintained that libertarians are principle-less, especially considering that their philosophy is metaphysically identical to that of the early American patriots. As Thomas Jefferson wrote, “I own I am not a friend to a very energetic government.” And neither is the libertarian. **Q**

Making a Modern Conservatism

The neoconservative-paleoconservative split, twenty years later

By Josh Lerner

No one could deny the brewing hostilities on the right. War, it seemed, was inevitable. The pillars of the conservative movement, from *National Review* to the Heritage Foundation, far from being on the sidelines, became the battlefield. A very consequential president had just left the scene, and the direction of the movement was as unknown as the outcome was bleak. The war fought here, over the ideas, the personalities, the religion of the movement, would, inevitably, transform the right, both politically and intellectually. It was described by some as a war between “Manhattan, Kansas and Manhattan Island” and it pitted natural allies against each other over what seemed, to outsiders, to be rather insignificant.

This could easily have described the sniping on the right since the disastrous 2008 election. But what I’m describing is something far more significant, far more intellectually substantive, and, to put it plainly, far less well known. What I am describing is the split between the paleoconservatives, those stalwarts of the Old Right who had been such an integral part of the conservative movement for the better part of half a century, and the neoconservatives, the upstart urbanites and ex-liberals or leftists who had rapidly ascended through the ranks of the institutions of the right. The conflict between the neoconservatives and the paleoconservatives, which was primarily fought between 1982 and 1996 (although slight skirmishes still break out on the margins), allowed neoconservative institutions and ideas to shape the trajectory of post-Communism conservatism, leaving the paleoconservatives isolated and marginalized. What made this conflict different than other factional conflicts on the right (which seem to arise nearly every other month) was that this battle rapidly ascended from the opinion page, to the foundation boardroom, through

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the nascent conservative media outlets, ending up in the White House. This conflict, for better or worse, helped forge the modern conservative movement and caused a major reevaluation of the intellectual foundations of conservatism itself. The figures and institutions we now consider standard bearers of conservatism—Rush Limbaugh, *National Review*, The Heritage Foundation—are largely a product of the neoconservative victory and the paleoconservative defeat.

The Players

To fully understand the nature and scope of this quarrel, we must start at the beginning: the main actors in this tragicomedy, the neoconservatives and the paleoconservatives. Both labels have been applied liberally and have been especially corrupted by those who oppose the movement.

This is, of course, the biggest problem with the concept of neoconservatism in particular, because, as the great sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset said “it was invented as an invidious label to undermine political opponents, most of whom have been unhappy with being so described.” It has often been used, fairly or unfairly, as a cudgel of the far left to bash those who’ve they decided as particularly noxious.

Nevertheless, “neoconservative” does describe a subset of intellectuals, and those so described do have several distinguishing characteristics. Neoconservatives are, as Irving Kristol so eloquently put it, “liberals who have been mugged by reality.” Their conservatism was a product of the failures of liberalism, and as such, was still predicated on many of the assumptions inseparable from modern liberalism. They all were, at different points in their career, liberals or leftists. All, at least in the beginning, believed in the welfare state, strong anti-communism, and the idea that a liberal democracy both lives and dies on the character of its people and its government. These beliefs were very much grounded in doubts about the radical reformism of the era, yet their

adherents still spoke of political reforms to address social problems in a language not terribly different from the liberal consensus they had recently divorced themselves from.

The one area in which the neoconservatives remained largely unchanged, however, was in foreign policy. American power, to the neoconservative, has always been a tool that was used to further both America's interest and the cause of international democratic capitalism. The two are, functionally, inseparable; Democratic Peace Theory influences much neoconservative foreign policy, but it is tempered by the recognition of the dangers of a non-liberal democracy evolving. The single element that is incontrovertible is the commitment to a robust use of American military power and the belief that it can, and must, be a force for good in the world. It has been stated that they possess a "non-traditional foreign policy agenda that was less deferential to traditional conceptions of diplomacy and international law and less inclined to compromise principles, even if that meant unilateral action."

Kristol also distinguished three specific aspects of neoconservatism from previous forms of conservatism: neo-conservatives had a forward-looking approach drawn from their liberal heritage, rather than the reactionary and dour approach of previous conservatives; they had a ameliorative outlook, proposing alternative reforms rather than simply attacking liberal social reforms; they took philosophical ideas and ideologies very seriously, rather than just dismissing them outright as did other conservatives (Russell Kirk famously called conservatism "the negation of ideology.") Neoconservatives were the products of the university system in the age of social science, and as such found much to be admired in the

exploration of all problems, whether they are scientific, social or political, from an analytic and academic perspective. This naturally led to the rise of neoconservative publications, particularly *The Public Interest* and *Commentary*, who were unafraid to publish pieces that challenged both liberal and conservative orthodoxies in an evenhanded and sharply critical manner, with *Commentary* taking on foreign policy and religion, and *The Public Interest* economics and social policy.

The fundamental characteristic of the neoconservatives, however, may be their willingness to fight for their ideas in ways that the left did as well. The neoconservatives were integral in founding many conservative institutions, or refurbishing old

ones and giving them new direction, purpose, and, most importantly, financial backing. The think tank, as exemplified by the American Enterprise Institute and the Manhattan Institute, became the place where scholars of a conservative bent, particularly social scientists, were able to not only work on their given projects but become a community of intellectuals. Think tanks allowed neoconservatives, libertarians, classical liberals, fusionists, social conservatives, and foreign policy experts to discuss and disseminate new ideas, in forums dedicated to their spread. The only ones who ended up being excluded (with a few noticeable exceptions) were the paleoconservatives.

The term paleoconservative, unlike neoconservative, was one embraced by its members quite instantaneously. The term, coined by paleoconservative humanities professor Paul Gottfried, defines a political ideology (although they would hate the use of that term) that is based around concepts of tradition, the importance of civil society, and the value of culture-specific heritage and identity. It is very much tied together by the belief that the established elements of Western Civilization must be protected above all else, and the role that the traditional forms of connection play in the sustenance of a nation. Thomas Fleming, a noted paleoconservative thinker and theorist posited that it was based around "the survival and enhancement of a particular people and its institutionalized cultural expressions."

Paleoconservatives, in the rich conservative tradition of Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk, exalt the necessity of tradition because of the limits of any individual's reason should lead us to trust in institutions that have survived for an extended period; the importance of

“Paleoconservatives, in the rich conservative tradition of Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk, exalt the necessity of tradition because of the limits of any individual’s reason should lead us to trust in institutions that have survived for an extended period.”

the permanent things in the maintenance of society is the paramount paleoconservative virtue. As historian Wesley McDonald put it “in a humane social order, a community of spirit is fostered in which generations are bound together. According to

Kirk, this link is achieved through moral and social norms that transcend the particularities of time and place and, because they form the basis of genuine civilized existence, can only be neglected at great peril. These norms, reflected in religious dogmas, traditions, humane letters, social habit and custom, and prescriptive institutions, create the sources of the true community that is the final end of politics.” The paleoconservative adheres to these traditional structures and institutions in

such a way as to fully reject any attempted, or realized, replacements or substitutes.

The chief paleoconservative values, tradition and Western Christian social norms, manifest themselves in several positions. For one, paleoconservatives believe strongly in a largely decentralized federal government. Although major disagreements exist about legislation in the social realm at the state and local level (ranging from the nearly theocratic Thomas Fleming to the nearly anarchist Llewellyn Rockwell), all paleoconservatives agree that action at the federal level, barring reasons of national defense, is not only unwise, but also immoral. This restricted notion of federal action is a major element of paleoconservative thought; they believe in a rigid conception of constitutionality and limited power that harkens back, as they themselves would point out, to a “Confederate understanding” of government action.

With that in mind, another key element of the paleoconservative’s worldview is his reluctance to join international affairs, either economically or militarily. As exemplified by Pat Buchanan, one of the foremost intellectual and political figures of paleoconservatism, isolationism and protectionism were the primary manifestations of paleoconservative foreign policy. This idea of an economically independent and non-entangled America was one that goes as far back to George Washington’s *Farewell Address*. The one exception paleoconservatives made to this was their ardent anti-Communism; beyond that, all foreign aid, intervention, or promotion of free trade was both problematic and unconstitutional.

Another realm of interest for paleoconservatives is that of race and culture. Paleoconservatives, more so than any other subset of modern conservatives, believe in the essential goodness of Western Culture (and Anglo culture in particular); they see it as necessary for the survival of our country that we embrace and encourage this. That means that the ethnic composition of a society is just as important as the proclamations of loyalty and patriotism; the cultural baggage a person carries is inseparable from his or her ethnic background and, as such, bears greatly on the success or failure of a polity.

Paleoconservatives are very much proponents of Southern culture and heritage. The Southern Agrarians, although predating Paleoconservatives by a good 40 years, provide the intellectual background that they take and run with. The single biggest belief held by these

Southern paleoconservatives is that the Southern way of life—particularly the aristocratic agrarian culture that was ubiquitous in the Antebellum era—was the best provider of the character and civic virtues that enable the thriving of a nation. The class distinctions and racial separation are not merely byproducts of the era, but important institutions that promoted the only quintessentially American culture anywhere. This meant that the paleoconservatives often viewed the Civil War as the War of Northern Aggression, and the South as the aggrieved party merely fighting for its civil and political rights (the issue of slavery is usually ignored). This conceptualization of American history provided the backdrop for the first real fight between the neoconservatives and the paleoconservatives, and it would be this type of battle that would ultimately decide the intellectual path that conservatism was going to take.

As can probably be easily understood, these two competing ideologies, although sharing much in common at a practical level, have fundamental differences in the way in which they think about politics and the political life. These philosophical differences ultimately framed the disagreements between the two sides and underscored the great conflict that was going to occur.

One must recognize how their different conceptions of America influence the two groups to pursue their different goals. The paleoconservative would emphasize the importance of social and religious institutions in the formation of the character of the United States. Prominent paleoconservatives have often argued that the American Revolution was not based on Enlightenment ideas, but as much on English Common Law and practical grievances. In his *The Roots of American Order*,

“Neoconservatives adopted this concept of combining rights and duties, of liberties and vices, as the way to properly understand politics . . . neoconservatives could rest upon universal truths and rights that transcend the temporal elements of any polity.”

Russell Kirk argued that it was the religiosity of the founders, as well as their sense of established laws that was the lynchpin of American power. The most important thing in the Founding was the establishment of permanent institutions (like the farm or the Church) and not the power of Enlightenment ideas.

The neoconservative vision of America, however, is much more based on the power of the ideas of the Enlightenment (particularly the power of natural rights) and on the dynamic leadership, practical foresight, and political thought of the founders. It was in this vein that many neoconservatives were (loosely) influenced by Leo Strauss or some of his followers. Straussians’ view of natural rights, their recognition of the dangers of

relativism, and their understanding of the philosophic origins of the American Founding (particularly that of Harry Jaffa and Walter Berns) helped ground many of the neoconservatives (specifically Irving Kristol) in a far more expansive and coherent political philosophy.

Straussian concepts of natural rights essentially combine traditional liberal views of these rights as immutable and universal realities that act as the ultimate check against tyranny within the framework of a classical conceptualization of excellence. The pursuit of individual liberty is just one of many goals of natural rights. Strauss recognized that there had been a fundamental interest in the problem of human excellence and political virtue. Neoconservatives adopted this concept of combining rights and duties, of liberties and vices, as the way to properly understand politics. Unlike paleoconservatives, who obsess over the particulars of a political regime—religion, associations, etc.—neoconservatives could rest upon universal truths and rights that transcend the temporal elements of any polity.

These different conceptions of philosophy in general and America in particular, set up the contrast of ideas that would extend throughout the respective movements. If America is based largely on traditional institutions and not ideas, then the paleoconservative commitment to the church and the ethnically homogenous, small farming community is the logical way to improve the nation. If, however, we are based on a commitment to the Enlightenment and a defense of natural rights, then the American political experience is benefited by social and political extensions of such philosophical movements. If these ideas are the ultimate goal of our nation, and things like the Constitution and treaties must serve these ends and are not ends unto themselves. This explains the neoconservative malleability on many issues, given that the ultimate goals are themselves harder to realize. It is through the use of social science, tempered by an awareness of its fundamental limitations, that we can realize the means to achieving these abstract goals.

For the most part, paleoconservatives saw social science as a manifestation of modernity and something that should not be trusted. Paleoconservatives argued their points through references to medieval ideas. They saw the means toward their ideal society as a return to traditional social relations. They eschewed a positive social science, grounded in statistical analysis, and the concrete policy goals that followed, seeing a political approach centered on these as too accepting of the decrepit state of society, and instead focused on universals and universal questions. The neoconservatives were concerned with something entirely different and, as such, the two camps largely argued past each other. The idea that political goals and practical politics should be separate is something entirely anathema to neoconservatives, men who believe

that it is the primacy of ideas that move history. The social sciences were simply another manifestation of that age-old truth. Paleoconservatives distrust theorists of any kind, and rather eschew them for either traditional forms of political (or pre political) life and the actions of practical statesmen. From a philosophical perspective, conflict between these two was simply inevitable; these competing visions of what constituted conservatism would have immense difficulty coexisting with each other.

The Schism

Regardless of one's views on neoconservatism or paleoconservatism, it is relatively uncontroversial to claim that the first issue to cause an intellectual rift between these superficial allies was the nomination of Mel Bradford to the National Endowment of the Humanities. In 1980, Bradford was selected by President Ronald Reagan to be the chairman of the Endowment. The selection was met with outrage from neoconservatives, particularly Irving Kristol and William Simon, centering partly on Bradford's criticisms of President Abraham Lincoln. They were concerned with Bradford's bizarre fascination with Lincoln as the American Caesar, his characterization of Lincoln as "a dangerous man," and his claim that "the image of Lincoln rose to be very dark" and "indeed almost sinister." Another issue was Bradford's support for the 1972 presidential campaign of George C. Wallace, who had run almost entirely on segregation and fervent opposition to the civil rights movement. The neoconservative choice, William Bennett, ultimately replaced Bradford at the behest of the Reagan administration. The controversy was far too intense for something that was seemingly rather unimportant.

But to the (newly named) paleoconservatives, this was an absolute affront. The Bradford-Bennett controversy, in many ways, was a microcosm of the internal conflict that had been brewing amongst conservatives for the previous decade and a half. Mel Bradford was the southern partisan par excellence. He was a professor of English literature at the University of Dallas, had studied with Donald Davidson—one of the 12 Southern Agrarians who signed off on the manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* in which Davidson wrote an essay supporting legal segregation,—and was from a prominent family in Dallas. Bradford's conservatism was largely a manifestation of his admiration for what he considered the idealized South. He always saw his studies and his background as being a part of the greater Southern cultural milieu. He was in many ways the archetype for the paleoconservative.

Bill Bennett, on the other hand, represented something very new, and very distinctive, in his version of conservatism. Bennett is largely the product of

modern urban education; he was born in Brooklyn and got his BA from Williams College. Two things jump out about Bennett: his PhD was in a more traditionally liberal subfield (political philosophy, as opposed to those of the literary types dominating conservatism at the time), and he was a lifelong Democrat (up till his nomination, that is) who had been, at least earlier in his life, a liberal. This meant that Bennett had been a part of the majority liberal academic culture and had come to his conservatism through his own rational means; he neither inherited it nor was he raised in it. On an issue-by-issue basis, Bennett is as conservative as Bradford—if not more—with the sole exception of the civil rights movement. Bennett, as would be common with most neoconservatives, did not see Bradford as an enemy per se, but rather as someone whose immoderate opinions and fiery rhetoric would do more damage than good. To Bradford, Bennett was a usurper and a fraud. The ascendancy of Bennett threatened the very legitimacy of the paleoconservative movement, because if even the avowedly conservative president rejected them as being too far from the mainstream, then there was little hope for them anywhere. This was just the beginning of a rather protracted conflict.

The next major eruption of hostilities happened in 1986 at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute conference on the state of conservatism. Some of the contributors at the conference complained about the intellectual ubiquity of the neoconservatives. Gregory Wolfe argued that true conservative scholars valued “order and organic community, class and natural aristocracy” and considered “Christian belief as the foundation of morality and law”; underlying this was the prospect that these “reformed liberals” were anything but conservative. Stephen Tonsor, a prominent paleoconservative, summed up their grievances as such: “It has always struck me as odd, even perverse, that former Marxists have been permitted, yes invited, to play such a leading role in the Conservative movement of the twentieth century. It is splendid when the town whore gets religion and joins the church. Now and then she makes a good choir director, but when she begins to tell the minister what he ought to say in his Sunday sermons, matters have been carried too far.” To many paleoconservatives, the idea that these outsiders could possibly come in and do anything to help the movement was preposterous and, in addition, they represented a danger to the cogency and unity of the movement. It is a criticism that would continue to show up throughout the whole of the conflict.

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Nothing, however, would prepare the conservative world for what happened on December 15, 1988 at the Heritage Foundation. Heritage, the premier conservative think tank that has often served as the mediator between warring factions, hosted legendary conservative thinker Russell Kirk on the subject of where the Right should go after the Reagan presidency. What Kirk delivered was an impassioned speech entitled “The Neoconservative: An Endangered Species” that served as a broadside against those in the movement that seemed to depart from (his own) accepted orthodoxy. Kirk, in no uncertain terms, stated that “the neoconservative group have not made many friends nor influenced many people, despite talents for self-publicizing...They have shown no great literary skill: I fear that not one

book by a neoconservative will still be read in the year 2000. neoconservatives have tended regrettably to become a little sect, distrusted and reproached by what we may call mainline conservatives, who now and again declare that many of the neoconservatives are seeking chiefly place and preferment.” Besides the bizarre admonition for not being good enough writers (which is natural, given that they are centered around the social sciences more than the humanities), Kirk demonstrated a remarkable tin ear for political prognostication. Underlying it all was a belief that the neoconservatives’ work was not at all valuable, and that their intellectual contributions were as much destructive of the conservative movement as they were helpful.

Kirk was worried as much by the appearance of these outsiders as he was by the nature of their ideas; his speech is filled with rambling invective that, on one significant occasion, borders on anti-Semitism. When he began talking about foreign policy, Kirk bellowed, “And not seldom it has seemed as if some eminent Neoconservatives mistook Tel Aviv for the capital of the United States,” a statement that, at best, implies malfeasance and disloyalty by the neoconservatives. The response to this was immediate. Midge Decter, wife of prominent neoconservative commentator Norman Podhoretz and the director of the Committee for the Free World (a neoconservative think tank) called Kirk’s remarks “a bloody outrage, a piece of anti-Semitism by Kirk that impugns the loyalty of neoconservatives.” The remarks, she maintained, were simply that “people like my husband and me put the interest of Israel before the interest of the United States, that we have a dual loyalty.” It is the dual loyalty charge that so infuriated many neoconservatives, most of who were Jewish, because of

the rich history of such charges being leveled against Jews as an excuse to excommunicate or exterminate them.

This incident, and further accusations of anti-Semitism, was far from isolated, and it would be these charges that, ultimately, did paleoconservatism in. These comments by Russell Kirk and others by Joe Sobran—who once remarked that the *New York Times* should “change its name to the Holocaust Update” and compared Israel early and often to Nazi Germany—and Pat Buchanan, the aura of anti-Semitism left the paleoconservatives in a very precarious place. Prominent

neoconservatives, from Nathan Glazer to Norman Podhoretz, condemned these remarks as the very worst of anti-Semitic rhetoric. But the real storm was saved for remarks Buchanan made on the McLaughlin Group in 1991. On the eve of the beginning of the Gulf War, Buchanan stated, “there are only two groups that are beating the drums for war in the Middle East—the Israeli defense ministry and its ‘amen corner’ in the United States.”

The fallout from this was immediate. Columnists on each side were shooting back and forth at quite a remarkable speed. Given that accusations of anti-Semitism are not ones to be taken lightly, this situation was becoming rather explosive. It was going to take the measured hand of William F. Buckley, impresario of modern American conservatism, to settle this. In early 1992, Buckley dedicated an entire issue of *National Review*, the flagship publication of the conservative movement, to this simple question: “are there elements in the conservative movement that are anti-Semitic?”

From these investigations and articles, Buckley produced his controversial book *In Search of Anti-Semitism*, in which he concluded that someone reading columns written by Joe Sobran, then a paleoconservative editor at *National Review* and one of Buckley’s hand-picked protégés, “might reasonably conclude that those [Israel] columns were written by a writer inclined to anti-Semitism.” Furthermore, Buckley found that the accusations leveled against Buchanan were, “regrettably unavoidable.” In his stance, Buckley, the captain steering the conservative ship and the symbol of the aristocratic element of conservatism the paleoconservatives so admired, legitimized the claims of Podhoretz and the neoconservatives. With this book, Buckley forcibly divorced mainstream conservatism from the paleoconservatives; with the resignation of Joe Sobran, no one who would be considered a mainstream paleoconservative was ever granted an editorship at *National Review* again.

The intellectual implications of this event may not be as readily apparent, but are still monumental. The question leading up to the rise of this conflict was the following one: how do conservatives reconcile their radically diverging opinions on the Gulf War? In what was essentially the first real contentious difference on substance within the right since the Goldwater nomination, the breakdown was

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very mixed. Many on the neoconservative spectrum saw no difference between dealing with Saddam Hussein, a monstrous tyrant whose regional hegemony threatened America’s economic and security interests, and

confronting the Soviets in Afghanistan or Grenada. Buckley was mostly swayed by this argument, and the conservative movement began to become more and more pro-war. Paleoconservatives, however, found themselves aligned with the same elements of the left that they so vigorously denounced in the 1960s. So politically, Buckley, and much of the mainstream conservative movement, was already alienated from the paleoconservatives. The anti-Semitism simply allowed Buckley to socially alienate them as well.

The consequences for the neoconservatives were immense as well. This moment crystallized the strong relationship that the neoconservatives would have with the rest of the movement. For one, it meant that they could therefore trust that the movement would not reject them for being Jews. When seen in the context of the Reagan revolution, we also see the gradual conservative shift of the neoconservatives become complete. By 1994, the political distinctions between neoconservatives and the mainstream conservative movement had largely disappeared, and, as Charles Krauthammer (another prominent later neoconservative) would argue, spelled the end of a distinctive political movement called neoconservatism. As we entered the post-Cold War era, conservatism would more and more resemble these same outsiders rather than the old legacy conservatives, and would position itself as something far more ideological and intellectual, rather than reactionary and stagnant.

Why the Conflict?

Besides the obvious areas of contention—all things Jewish and pertaining to Israel—why did these two factions which, ostensibly had (or at least should have had) at least a superficial alliance, fight such a bitter conflict? The answer is almost as much sociological as it is political.

The first reason conflict occurred was because these

two sides were culturally as alienated from one another as possible. Paleoconservatives lived the idealized vision of what a conservative community would constitute. They inhabited homogenous, largely Southern, communities in which there were high levels of social capital, built around things like common religion, tradition, and background. It was why the Mel Bradford thing took paleoconservatives by surprise. He was, in many ways, the epitome of the Southern gentleman scholar, and as such was such a respected member of the paleoconservative intellectual movement. To see him treated so badly, by people calling themselves conservative no less, was a real shock to the system for the paleoconservatives. Because paleoconservatives lived in small, close-knit communities, they viewed their movement as such a community and reacted with the same sort of indignation when one of their own was (in their view) mistreated. Nothing Bradford was saying was outside the mainstream of conservative thought then.

Nor were the claims made about minorities made by “racial realists” and paleoconservatives Steve Sailer and Jared Taylor outside of the realm of things that would be uttered at a paleoconservative conference. Taylor, famous for his belief in the forced breeding of “high success ethnicities”, had, in their early years, written for such mainstream conservative publications as *National Review* and the *American Spectator*. The more his racial opinions became well known, however, the less he was invited to write for mainstream conservative publications. The shift in the respectability can be directly tied to the change in the nature of the conflict; Buckley’s leveling of the anti-Semitism charge became the impetus for other conservatives without anything like the same clout that Buckley had, to slowly purify the movement from the tinge of the racist elements of paleoconservatism. And Sailer, although not nearly as noxious as Taylor, publically defended a racially minded policy towards immigrants in the United States, and accepted the inevitability of a permanent non-White underclass in America.

Neoconservatives were a radically different bunch. They were largely the children of immigrants, who have lived in both squalor and success, and who view their American journey as one of progress and change. They ascended through the social ranks, not through industry or their good name, but through education and politics. Because most (but certainly not all) were Jews, they had an immediate distrust of ethnic homogeneity and

religious conformity. Consider the accusations leveled against the neoconservatives by paleoconservatives; they were “usurpers” “outsiders” and “imposters.” The basic assumption held by many paleoconservatives was that these men were simply not of the same stock or background that they were. And the neoconservatives felt

the same way about the paleoconservatives. They viewed the communities that paleoconservatives came from as good ones, but far from the only ones. They also would never themselves live in such a community; they were urban (and later suburban) people who saw very little personally appealing in rural life.

This intellectual alienation the neoconservatives felt from the paleoconservatives was nothing compared to the social distance experienced by the two groups. From a strictly sociological perspective, there was very little the neoconservatives and the paleoconservatives could agree to. Lew Rockwell, noted paleolibertarian (and harsh critic of neoconservatism) once illustrated the breadth of the chasm between the two with the story of an encounter between a (theoretical) neoconservative and a paleoconservative. “The neocon complained that the paleocon made an ‘insensitive remark’ about AIDS and said, ‘How can you say that, when we all have so many close friends who have been struck down by this terrible disease?’ The paleo replied, “‘Close friends?’ I don’t know anyone who has AIDS. I don’t know anyone who knows anyone who has AIDS.’ After that, the neocon stopped speaking to the paleocon.”

This social split was made worse by the minority status of many of the neoconservatives. They largely broke from the left because of perceived excesses of the movement. They had no interest, however, of taking on the mantle of the majority ethnicity of this country. They had no interest in reviving pre-Enlightenment institutions and restraints on human behavior, and as such, saw the more medieval elements of paleoconservatism as something directly opposed to their vision of America. It was here that the intersection between ideas and sociology became apparent. The aforementioned respective visions of America reflected the confluence of their social background and intellectual beliefs; the combination of the two created such a massive dissonance between the two as to make them essentially two functionally separate entities. This functional inability to accommodate one another wouldn’t have mattered too much were it not for their competition for both foundation money and the

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prominence and importance that comes along with that.

But it was not simply demographics or geography that separated neoconservatives and paleoconservatives.

It was social organization and “respect” for ideas and those that think about them that created the most rifts between the two. Irving Kristol had more respect for liberals like Lionel Trilling

and Arthur Schlesinger than he did for conservative “icons” like the Southern Agrarians or Russell Kirk. The intellectual legacy of the paleoconservatives meant very little to most neoconservatives. Any claims to the beauty of agrarian lifestyle, or the simple romanticism of town life were lost on the largely urban neoconservatives, who viewed ideology and politics as things based on more than a romantic nostalgia and poetry. While they would admire the literary skills of certain old conservative icons, particularly figures like T. S. Eliot, neoconservatives didn’t care at all for his politics or his prose. To them the intellectual orientation that many paleoconservatives had embraced was one that was entirely about dispositions and inclinations, and not ideas. Conservative classics like Richard Weaver’s *Ideas Have Consequences* were not treated with reverence by neoconservatives, but, at best, faint praise, and at worst, fairly harsh critical analysis. Paleoconservatives viewed these books with something far more than just praise, they were the building blocks from which paleoconservatism came. Neoconservatives evaluated a given work not on its “importance” “influence” or status as a conservative classic, but rather on its merits and, a real sticking point for many neoconservatives, its applicability.

The many incidents involving Russell Kirk are a case in point. To many on the right, Kirk was one of the great intellectual heroes of the 20th century. His book, *The Conservative Mind*, single-handedly legitimized Anglo-American conservative claims to a rich intellectual history, and acted as a swift rebuttal to the claims of Vital Center liberals, particularly Lionel Trilling, that “[l]iberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition” and that conservatism is incapable of anything save for “irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas.” But this meant very little in the 1980s, when Kirk was at the center of a major controversy over the perceived anti-Semitism of his remarks. To neoconservatives, many of whom were students (or at least admirers of) Lionel Trilling, Russell Kirk was a minor intellectual figure, one who specialized in “connecting disparate

ideas” into a framework of conservatism that was as much a literary movement as it was anything political.

Its value as a “conservative classic” was meaningless to

neoconservatives, who would deride such works as decidedly anti-functional and not terribly useful. To the paleoconservatives, Russell Kirk was someone who demanded full and complete respect

and, as such, were aghast that people calling themselves conservative would dare attack him.

The final area in which conflict arose was in the ways they approached the practice of politics. Neoconservatives recognized early on the need to organize and to create foundations and institutions to perpetuate their ends. The think tank and non-profit, always a part of the conservative movement, became focal points of the neoconservatives. They created modern organizations that were well equipped to fight against the left. The paleoconservatives, long suspicious of the practical elements of the think tank culture, did not organize nearly as well. Because the neoconservatives were concerned with policy more than the paleoconservatives, their institutions simply attracted more money and more obvious importance. The inequality here caused many paleoconservatives to see the neoconservatives, who they viewed as outsiders and intruders, as the enemy. Were it not for the neoconservatives, they argued, there would be ample money available for all sorts of paleoconservative projects. The rise of the neoconservative institutions, (American Enterprise Institute, Project for the New American Century, Bradley Foundation, Ethics and Public Policy Center, etc.) created such a sophisticated network of think tanks and non-profits that it allowed the far easier spread of neoconservative ideas. Paleoconservative institutions just weren’t as sophisticated, nor did they reach nearly the breadth or depth of people.

Envy was simply an unavoidable outcome of the drastic inequality. Consider the Mel Bradford nomination conflagration. Would the controversy over his beliefs ever reached the forefront were it not for the tangible means associated with his ascension to the National Endowment for the Humanities? Would Russell Kirk have leveled the same type of vitriol he did against the neoconservatives had he not felt pushed out of one of the great institutions of the Right, the Heritage Foundation? If these practical concerns had not existed, if there wasn’t a scarcity of resources and attention for those in the conservative movement, and if the discrepancy in the usefulness of

their politics hadn't been so great, this conflict never would have developed.

Where We Are Today

Neoconservative ideas and institutions have been largely integrated into the broader conservative movement. The last policy arena in which neoconservatives and regular conservatives diverged at least somewhat was foreign policy. The democratic idealism of many neoconservatives ran contrary to more naturally realist elements of conservative foreign policy. Given the state of the War in Iraq, it would seem that the conservative realists and the neoconservatives reached some sort of compromise over things like the surge and such, but neoconservative policy writ large was not adopted as thoroughly. The convergence between conservatism and neoconservatism gave conservatism a policy-analyzing edge that has enabled the movement to expand intellectually quite considerably in the last 30 years. The influence of conservatism on neoconservatism has grounded the movement and given it more of a direct political influence that it otherwise might not have had.

The rise of Ron Paul and the Tea Parties may signify a reemergence of elements of the paleoconservative movement. Of course, the Tea Partiers, as evidenced by recent polling done by Rasmussen, are far more similar to conventional conservatives, and eschew the anti-Semitism and isolationism of the paleoconservatives, than would be predicted if it were really a harbinger of a return of the paleoconservatives. The likelihood of another conservative civil war is remote. Our divisions today are far less pronounced than they were then, and the movement is stronger due to the neoconservatives' policy-innovating acumen, willingness to found institutions, and articulation of a non-antiquated, non-nostalgic conservatism. The fundamental connection between mainstream conservatism and neoconservatism has been strengthened in recent years and a return to the radically different worldview of those inclined towards

paleoconservatism seems rather unlikely.

Given that the primary differences in the conservative movement are on policy and not philosophy, the movement exhibits a cohesiveness that simply did not exist in the 1980s. A conservatism influenced by neoconservatism strove to find applications for conservative principles in the practical realm, facilitating the explosion of conservative policy ideas during the 1970s and 1980s. This conservatism has built an intricate policy-creating apparatus that can, and will, affect the issues pertaining to everyday voters. Neoconservatives, unlike many previous versions of members of the conservative movement, had no problem in compromising in some of the broader aspects of their vision to accommodate the nuances of practical politics and the current debate on many issues. This realization increased the usefulness of the intellectual right to the crafting of specific policies and to the legislative process. In that sense, it can be stated that neoconservatives wanted conservatism to be a relevant force in 20th century politics, and that meant making the types of compromises that paleoconservatives simply refused. It was not so much a moderation of opinions as it was a moderation of temperaments. By crafting a conservatism that can function in a modern political society, neoconservatives forced conservatives to articulate and defend their principles and policies to those that disagreed with them. It was, in many ways, a modernization of the right.

The neoconservative-paleoconservative conflict could be seen as an embodiment of the maturation of the right. For once, the right was concerned with dealing with politics as it is, not as it was or as it should be. The right became a focal point of innovative policy arguments and thoughts. Far from being a group of disinterested reactionaries, the right became a landscape of dynamic intellectual exchange. After the battle, conservatism was left modernized and ready to fight (and win) battles of public policy. **Q**

Taking Music Seriously

Irony and sincerity in Lady Gaga and Natalie Merchant

By George Saad

The best minds in the country have matured in the setting of postmodern academia for over half a century now, having been taught by respected academicians that abstract standards of truth are just the imperialistic Western prejudice of a less enlightened time. Our culture has, in response, turned from the virtue of sincerity, embracing instead the non-committal irony compatible with a nihilistic worldview. And while those cloistered keepers of academia can and do hide their denial of any standard of truth by inventing ever new and refined means of obfuscation and verbal acrobatics, the soul of a culture, its true essence, must be manifest in the art it accepts and cherishes.

The virtue of sincerity, the willingness to fully identify and express one's innermost convictions, is the foundation of a robust culture. Healthy intellectual discourse demands that all express their views forthrightly, so that all aspects of every position may be brought to full attention, without the self-censorship of unpopular or sensitive judgments. Any debate or discussion of truth must begin with a commitment to sincere expression, lest suspicion be cast on the face value of all professed beliefs. With pursuit of the truth as a goal, a person may make many honest errors, but they will never correct or even identify those errors if they allow for the creation of an insincere artificial character that ignores their real confusions and stops seeking answers.

Of course, this all assumes that there is an objective

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order in the world that a person can judge and sincerely evaluate. If there is no truth, as the postmodernists contend, then sincerity is a false virtue; loyalty to truth, the act of a misguided martyr. The postmodernists believe, following Michael Foucault, that "It is meaningless to speak in the name of—or against—Reason, Truth, or Knowledge." This creates a glaring, unavoidable problem. How could Foucault speak in such definite terms against fundamental concepts like reason, truth, and knowledge without categorizing this very statement as a "truth" of which he wishes us to have "knowledge", presumably by appealing to our "reason"? The position of the postmodernists is brazenly self-contradictory, as any positive claim they attempt to advance is undercut by their insistence on the impossibility of a positive claim.

Richard Rorty, another postmodern philosopher, recognized that the acceptance of the postmodern metaphysical project necessarily entailed a new psychological attitude as well. Calling his system "ironism", Rorty recognized that a system that denied the possibility of truth could not demand that its adherents adhere to it sincerely, as this would mean devotion to a system of ideas that denies that any system is worthy of devotion. Commenting on the problem posed by Foucault's above statement, he added that,

"The difficulty faced by a philosopher who, like myself, is sympathetic to this suggestion, one who thinks of himself as auxiliary to the poet rather than to the physicist—is to avoid hinting that this suggestion gets something right, that my sort of philosophy corresponds to the way things really are. For this talk of correspondence brings

back just the idea my sort of philosopher wants to get rid of, the idea that the world or the self has an intrinsic nature.”

The solution, in Rorty’s view, is not to reevaluate the position that objectivity is impossible, but to never think that oneself or anyone else ever “gets something right”. The abstract epistemological position that any sort of reality is unknowable produces, in turn, the practical psychological phenomenon of never speaking or acting in full conviction of anything. Irony replaces sincerity as a virtue.

While one may object here that this is only so much deductive theorizing, the culture has indeed produced an immensely popular artist who embraces ironic detachment as an aesthetic ideal. The average man on the street can ignore the philosophizing of Richard Rorty, but he cannot ignore the music of Lady Gaga. A sudden sensation, whose lyrics and presentation shock and confuse the more sensibly minded, Lady Gaga’s bizarre aesthetic persona is the symbol of a culture that has accepted a frivolous, ironic approach to life, wherein the only meaning left to be found is that of confounding meaning. Almost paraphrasing Richard Rorty’s formulation of ironism and adapting it to the aesthetic, Lady Gaga has explained, “For me, art is a lie, and the artists are there to create lies we kill when we make it true.”

In an age when most philosophers claim that philosophy, impotent to discover the truth, is irrelevant to practical living, the culture mirrors that void. What is remarkable about Lady Gaga is that she has achieved amazing commercial success not by keeping her act accessible to the average person, but by introducing an arbitrary, nonsensical aesthetic to pop music. Over 20 million people have watched her video “Telephone”, in which Lady Gaga wears sunglasses pasted with lit cigarettes and an outfit consisting only of caution tape, lyrically devoting an entire song to the annoyance of a being incessantly contacted by a telephone, while acting out a lesbian revenge fantasy of murdering a boorish boyfriend with sidekick Beyoncé. It is an incoherent pastiche of product placements, constant outfit changes, in no way related to the plot, and cheap visual stimulation achieved by rapid cuts. The music inspires no deep feeling, as the cheap, manufactured beats race along without gravity or intricacy.

But what is distinctive about this video is not its lack of musical and lyrical sophistication; pop stars have been

producing unrefined music for decades. Rather, it is that it makes no coherent positive commitments whatsoever, not to even the usual low level themes of money, lustful attraction, and partying common in similar music. One is forced to conclude after several decades of the nihilism of modern art, when one may see a telephone placed in exhibit and given a title as a work of art, the wider culture has finally made peace with the philosophical vacuum created by the intellectual leadership. Our culture now embraces those artists whose art embodies the ironic attempt to create meaning where all concede that none can be found. While we may think that figures like Rorty are detached from the practical life of a culture, one that actively seeks this sort of senselessness is practicing the

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Rorty’s ideal as best as it can be practiced, finding meaning in the meaningless.

As such, any hint of the meaningful in Lady Gaga’s music must be subverted ironically. Her treatment of romantic themes glorifies them only insofar as they

are deceptive and even destructive. This comes out explicitly in the lyrics of “Poker Face”, a song about how ably she can puts on a poker face to seem attracted to a man while in fact fantasizing about a lesbian lover. In the song “Bad Romance,” a romance is glorified precisely for its destructiveness. She tells her lover , “I want your ugly/I want your disease/I want your everything/As long as it’s free” and “I want your horror/I want your design/‘Cuz you’re a criminal/As long as you’re mine”. To take romantic love, the ultimate tribute to another person, and twist it so much that the attraction is based precisely on beloved’s evil is a colossal feat of insincerity, being ironically repulsed to that which should inspire the greatest admiration. Fittingly, the music video ends with a macabre shot of Lady Gaga lying next to the subject’s charred corpse, having ironically consummated her burning passion in his fiery destruction.

The contradictory elements of her public persona also show that her entire act must be taken ironically. In a discussion of her video “Telephone”, she claimed to be commenting on the excesses of consumerism by putting Coke cans in her hair, yet the entire video features product placements for brands she is affiliated with, from Virgin Mobile, which sponsors her tours, to Polaroid, a company that recently named her Creative Director for a special line of products. She is the perfect symbol of the mindless consumerism she decries, with a line of headphones selling for \$120, yet she still ironically plays the role of socially conscious performer. The same is also true of her alleged creative struggles. Commenting on her future, she has said, “I am focused

“A culture taught to heap disdain upon truth and morality must have a perpetual frivolity about it to escape this dark emptiness; Kafkaesque viral dance videos that repeat a refrain of ‘I don’t want to think anymore’ lack the gravity for any deep appreciation, and so the viewer, in turn, laughs at himself for watching, completing the ironic cycle of self-contradiction and triviality.”

on the work. I am constantly creating. I am a busy girl. I live and breathe my work. I love what I do. I believe in the message. There’s no stopping. I didn’t create the fame, the fame created me.” After asserting herself as an internally motivated creator, who loves creation as an end in itself, she immediately subverts this by then claiming that her entire character is an artifice of fame. Once more, the irony of claiming to be a devoted artist while having nothing to say of oneself separate of one’s fame is inescapable. As Rolling Stone said of her album “Fame Monster”, “Half the disc is Madonna knock-offs, but that’s part of the concept — fame monsters needn’t concern themselves with originality.”

Given the enormous popularity of someone who embodies the ironic subversion of values, one must lament that her popularity is the result of the mindlessness of a culture dogmatically tutored in the fictions that epistemic certainty is the province of religious fanatics and that a commitment to meaning is an unenlightened prejudice to be sacrificed for the appreciation of any brazen outlandishness. They are now fascinated by someone who dares express openly the emptiness they have all known silently; someone who would openly declare fame as her sole source of merit when they have only been so bold as to sacrifice honest ambitions for prestigious careers, who would declare that they are seeking a destructive romance when they merely enjoy the voyeurism of watching the broken couples of reality TV, someone whose life’s work consists of the construction of a deliberately contrived identity when they only sometimes tailor their thoughts and opinions to match group conformity. A culture taught to heap disdain upon truth and morality must have a perpetual frivolity about it to escape this dark emptiness; Kafkaesque viral dance videos that repeat a refrain of “I don’t want to think anymore” lack the gravity for any deep appreciation, and so the viewer, in turn, laughs at himself for watching, completing the ironic cycle of self-contradiction and triviality.

Almost all modern art lacks seriousness and has a similar quality of being ironically manufactured without any depth or consideration, if with less flagrancy. However, one female vocalist in particular stands out from this trend, achieving a notably aware, sincere aesthetic against the detached world of the pop diva. Recently in

the news for her new album “Leave Your Sleep”, which revives forgotten Victorian children’s poetry to music, the entire career of Natalie Merchant stands as such a defiant anachronism, achieving a state of artistic purity foreign to modern art. Speaking of her 1998 album “Ophelia”, she commented, “There’s no irony on this album. I have fifty-six minutes every four years, and I want to say something honest to people.” Her depth of feeling and sincerity of expression draws the listener into an entirely different cognitive and emotional universe from that of Lady Gaga, one acutely aware and substantially introspective, where strong, unfiltered passions come forth to be celebrated as the essence of life.

In Merchant’s music, one finds an oasis of rich meaning, full of structured, sincere consideration of matters of importance. Her lyrics are always seeking, grasping for greater understanding and benevolently reaching for the amelioration of humanity. “Carnival,” one of her most popular songs, advances the metaphor of the world as a raucous carnival, which she must consciously navigate to avoid the corruption of its surreal sensationalism. She sings,

“I’ve walked these streets/ A virtual stage/ It seemed to me/ Make up on their faces/ Actors took their/ Places next to me/...All the cheap thrill seekers/ The vendors & the dealers/ They crowded around me / Have I been blind/ Have I been lost/ Inside myself and/ My own mind / Hypnotized/ Mesmerized/ By what my eyes have seen?”

Where Lady Gaga hides behind a concocted façade of cheap imagery, Natalie Merchant describes the finding of substance in a world ruled by escapism. Her smooth, sublime sound provokes the listener to a state of serene contemplation, with the richly textured melodies matching the density of Merchant’s concerns, as mentally engaging as Gaga’s synthesized, frenetic beats are stultifying.

Another song, “I May Know the Word,” deals with the difficulty of maintaining a loyalty to truth and values in a world ruled by the indefiniteness of the postmodern project. Knowing what should be done but unable to live a fully authentic way, Merchant seeks confirmation of her devotion to the truth in morally gray landscape, explaining,

"I may know the word/But not say it/I may love the fruit/But not taste it/...But it's all gray here/ It's all gray to me/...Something move me/Someone prove me wrong/Before night comes/With indifference."

She offers an acute thoughtfulness, one that begins as a natural zest for truth and meaning, and in the end captures the ethical and cognitive vacuum sapping the foundations of Western society. Not able to penetrate to the philosophical root of postmodern culture, she is an earnest and attentive spectator, deeply confused and disturbed by the evasive cultural frivolity, as exemplified by Lady Gaga.

Unafraid to express herself in richly contemplative themes, Merchant also conveys a depth of emotion without sounding cliché or cheesy. Her emotional sincerity, communicated via her irreplaceably unique voice, is such that an ironic, dismissive interpretation of her message is impossible. Without losing the elegance of her style or her ability to consider complexities, she conveys the most bitter, raw emotion in "Beloved Wife", a song about the death of a man's wife written for "About Schmidt", lamenting, "I can't believe /I've lost the very best of me/..._a depth so deep /into my grief /without my beloved soul/I renounce my life". Merchant directly presents the most foreboding emotional state possible, having lost one's greatest love and considering one's own end, without censorship or ironic distance from the audience, telling of an unbearable pain in a way that demands that the listener consider the reality of death. In "Life is Sweet", she feelingly expresses a feeling of exultation, contrasting the notion of life as a burden with that of it as an infinitely precious gift, "They told you life is long/Be thankful when it's done/Don't ask for more, be grateful/But I tell you life is short/Be thankful, because before you know it/ It will be over". Confident enough to express such unrefined emotions as the feeling that "life is sweet", she nonetheless does not present a Pollyannaish account of it, instead conveying

a deep sensitivity to the reality of despair, making her joyousness all the more authentic for its depth.

Unfortunately, given the current state of culture, a vulgar fraud like Lady Gaga has acquired greater acclaim than a true artist like Natalie Merchant. A country that laughs at its gravest national issues every evening on Steven Colbert and Jon Stewart is going to be a country that listens to songs about the annoyance of a cell phone ringing on a dance floor, not sublime feelings of the exultation of life or deep moral confusions. When it is a mark of enlightened sophistication in the highest halls of learning to deny any conception of truth and remain blasé about all moral values, such a self-loathing, ironic culture necessarily follows. While the outlook for a better culture seems bleak, with jaded irony becoming the default tone

for our generation, we can never forget that such a detached, self-mocking approach to life cannot create real achievement and keep the world moving for long, as it aims at nothing beyond the advancement of its own vanity, in the

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creation of "fame monsters."

Echoing the theme of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, which shows how a world without real, non-ironic creators cannot sustain itself, the lyrics to Natalie Merchant's "Just Can't Last" declare, "I know you have the weight of the world today/It's on your back/A heavy load like that is gonna hold you back/It's gonna drag you down/You know it just can't last, just can't/You know it just can't last". Today every person committed to an honest appreciation of facts and a sincere attainment of values is in this position, battling against a cancerous culture that will eat away at them for their willingness to confront reality without a façade. While the prospects of a cultural reversal remain dim but not impossible, it is certain that without one the ironists that revel in laughing at a plausibly real parody in The Onion will one day awake to find that they have been laughing at reality all along, and that there is nothing left appropriate for laughter.

Q

A Symposium on Books

We asked students, professors, and alumni:

Which book most influenced your thinking about issues of political life?

Which book would you recommend to a young person interested in the serious study of politics?

Richard A. Epstein

Gaius' Institutes

I have been asked to indicate what book has had the most influence on my political philosophy. On that question it is possible for me to give the conventional answers of all classical liberals, which is the books that dominated that tradition: Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise*, and Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*. None of those answers would be wrong, but none of them would be, I think, instructive.

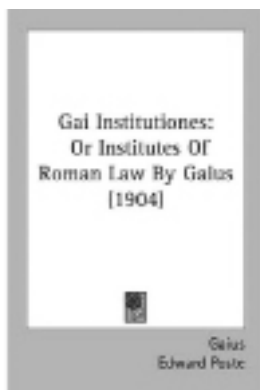
It is therefore more instructive on this occasion to indicate what influence on my intellectual life allows me to bring something to the table that is not shared by most writers in the classical liberal tradition. And to answer this question, it is helpful to remind readers that my education as a political philosopher ended with my graduation from Columbia College in 1964.

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And my education as a lawyer began at Oxford as a law student at Oriel College in the fall of 1964, where my first course of instruction was in Roman Law, a subject that I continue to teach to this day. The first assignment in that first course relied heavily on the book that has had an enormous influence on my life, *Gaius' Institutes*.

What, a reader might ask, could anyone hope to learn from a primer written for Roman law students around 160 AD by a man about whose life virtually nothing else is known? A lot is the answer, at least if you try. First, as for significance, *Gaius' Institutes* were lost until recovered by accident around 1816. But in the interim they served as the foundation for the far more famous book, *Justinian's Institutes*, written over 350 years later. Without question that book of Justinian is the single most influential book ever written on law, given that it shaped the development of western legal thought in both the Roman and the common law tradition for close to 1500 years. (Blackstone may be a close second, but he came too late in the game to influence the world, writing as he did in the 1760s. His influence was therefore enormous on the American front, but not on the continent.)

The question, then, is why? Because Gaius, with a few errors along the way, basically got the dominant



categories of legal analysis correct. He wrote in clear form that the first set of legal rules dealt with the acquisition of private property from its unowned condition, and thus articulated the first possession rule which to this day remains the basis of all systems of private property. He was also smart enough to realize (a point that Justinian makes clearer) that all property could not, and should not, be reduced to private ownership, and thus explained how various types of public property could and should, coexist with private property—a point which some modern legal thinkers starting with Locke (who was less accurate on all these points) missed. He then explained that the two offshoots of the property regime were torts and contracts, where the former dealt with the use of prohibited means to achieve personal ends, and the second dealt with the gains from voluntary exchange. But he did not stop there; he also articulated the rules that governed various kinds of forced exchanges, which resulted when by mistake the property or labor of two individuals were mixed together in ways that formed a whole that was more valuable than its constituent parts. The allocation of the gains from these ventures led to the articulation of a sensible set of principles of when strong property rules, which allow for exclusion, become weaker property rules that require the payment of just compensation in order to secure the balance between the parties.

Needless to say the ability to understand these rules lays the foundation for understanding the much more complex arrangements that are needed to articulate the relationship between a fully developed system of private law and a complex system of direct public regulation, chiefly through the exercises of the powers of taxation and eminent domain. These two systems should be adopted only when they produce overall social gain which can then be distributed in a coherent fashion (often by *pro rata* rules) in order to preserve the social surplus from factional intrigue. The accuracy of these rules in earlier times was quite extraordinary, and their solutions are often superior to those of modern writers whose self-conscious instrumentalism often leads them astray on particular cases.

Over and over again in my own life, I have tested modern political institutions against the ancient standards that can be derived from understanding the intuitive, natural law, conclusions of the earlier writers, of whom Gaius was the most influential. It helps in academics, as in all other areas of life, to benefit from intelligent product differentiation. Gaius, and the other Roman texts supplied me that intellectual advantage. Who would have ever thought in 1964 that these older texts could have exerted such a profound influence on my life?

Kevin Jiang

Patriotic Grace

by Peggy Noonan

The task of introducing any person into the complex and highly opinionated world of American political dialogue is a risky endeavor. This is increasingly true in the modern political sphere in which opinion is overwhelmingly available in print, on television, and, in particular, on the Internet. One risks creating not a conscientious contributor to political dialogue, but a mouthpiece for popular pundits, who are given to repeating the popular stance on a political issue rather than considering or even acknowledging the opposing side. Considering the present dangers, the first book I would recommend to anyone wishing to enter the political dialogue is *Patriotic Grace* by former Reagan speechwriter and current *Wall Street Journal* opinion columnist Peggy Noonan.

Barely long enough to be considered much more than a pamphlet, Noonan's book presents a clear, evenhanded assessment of the state of the modern political sphere and the deepest problem underlying and undermining it. As a mainstay of the Republican Party herself, Noonan takes a distinctly conservative tone throughout her book, which nonetheless remains accessible to the politically undecided and even to most liberals. Through the cordial, eloquent style that she has cultivated as a speechwriter and in her weekly column, Noonan argues that divisive partisanship has become the norm among politicians.

Noonan laments the loss of what she calls "patriotic grace," specifically, a loss of what she simply describes as "what the people of our country really long for in our national life: forgiveness and grace, maturity and wisdom." Citing the national unity after 9/11 and the subsequent dissolution of that unity, Ms. Noonan contends that the public must regain that unity for the good of the nation. However, it is important to note that the patriotic grace Ms. Noonan calls for is not a sort of national group hug, or a resolution of partisan divides; rather, it is a less acerbic political atmosphere, where the shallow negativity that pervades modern pundit dialogue is overtaken by smart, constructive debate. In overcoming this shallowness, Noonan argues, the ensuing political discussion will be focused on the *best way* to push the United States into the future, rather than simply *their way* versus *my way*.

I have recommended *Patriotic Grace* to every person

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I know who is even marginally interested in the political world. True, *Patriotic Grace* does very little to cultivate one's political stance. It nevertheless assumes a far more important role, in defining what it means to be a responsible citizen who engages in useful politics. Whereas before, my political debates often degenerated into stagnant yelling contests, I now have far more stimulating discussions both with those who hold my beliefs and even with those whom I doubt I could ever be in agreement. In turn, I find myself, as well as those around me, more educated about the overall political climate. By avoiding the pettiness that often bogs down political discussion, we are more prepared to be the educated voters and political thinkers that American politics depends on. While *Patriotic Grace* is by no means the last word in introducing serious political thought, it does provide the most coherent, concise overview of the one vital trait that is sadly lacking in most political enthusiasts.

Josh Lerner

The Road to Serfdom

By F. A. Hayek

For those of us who combat the most pernicious forms of statist ideology, few books are more important or relevant than Friedrich von Hayek's first classic *The Road to Serfdom*. It is no exaggeration to claim that this book provided the first real rebuttal to the "vital center" Keynesian solutions of the 1940s as well as the global threat of creeping socialism, and thus provided the intellectual backing to those engaged in the war against collectivism.

What makes *The Road to Serfdom* unique is that it is not designed to be read by the "true believer." Hayek intended the book to be read by those with whom he did not agree, going as far as dedicating the book to the "socialists of all parties." It is no coincidence that this book is so often cited as the intellectual turning point for many who become conservatives or libertarians late in life; one becomes immediately enamored of the clarity and passion in the writing of someone clearly more comfortable in the realm of the technical article. Hayek is at his very best in this book, ably combining elements of a philosophical treatise with those of a book of

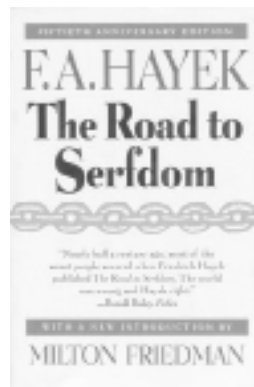
practical politics. The abstractions that Hayek lays out, in the clearest of language, are buttressed by powerful, tangible examples, laying forth the very clear ideology of a profoundly thoughtful man.

The argument of *The Road to Serfdom* is a rather simple one: all forms of centralized economic planning invariably lead to the expansion of arbitrary state power; these powers, in the wrong hands, can easily become tyrannical. Hayek contends that the only solution centralized authorities have developed for the information-gathering problems they will invariably face (a concept he fully develops in his magnificent article "The Use of Knowledge in Society") is the procurement of more power at the expense of individual rights and liberties. Hayek posited that command economies were doomed to waste, inefficiency and eventual collapse, because modern economies are too large and complicated to be evaluated and centralized. Markets provide every individual with the incentives to know the information necessary to maximize efficiency.

Within the framework of a market, this information is handled relatively effectively. However, any centralized authority can only have partial knowledge of the necessary information pertinent to the functioning of the economy. When the state authority fails to allocate resources efficiently, it responds to this failure by taking more power—dictating more elements of the economy to minimize this inefficiency (what has been styled as "Prussian Efficiency"). This expanded role that government plays, particularly powers taken during a time of crisis, quickly becomes permanent powers that seek as much their perpetuation as their prosperity. Think of things like the Great Society: if the goal of the Great Society was to eliminate poverty, its inability to do so simply means, to the well intentioned believer in said program, that it needs both more time and more money to work. Its failure to alleviate poverty becomes evidence of its necessity! Hayek lamented,

"Emergencies have always been the pretext on which the safeguards of individual liberty have been eroded." Hayek draws these conclusions by harkening back to the formative days of the two great totalitarian powers of the 20th century, Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, and pointing out that in both, the fundamental belief in the power of planning led to concomitant expansion of government powers. Centralized economic planning provides the fertilizer to the seed of totalitarianism.

But Hayek isn't wrapped up in any Ron Paul-style utopia. His vision is that of a limited and prudential state, not the pseudo anarchic state sometime longed for by modern day libertarians. He states, and rightly so, that "nothing has done so much harm to the liberal cause as



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the wooden insistence of some liberals on certain rough rules of thumb, above all the principle of laissez-faire.”

And this book could not be more relevant than it is now. As President Obama seeks to expand government control further and further, and as the case for individual rights and liberties are slowly abandoned, Hayek’s warnings become all the more prescient every day. The increasing hubris of this administration, manifesting itself in the belief that it can manage the economy better than the market: that this expansion of government power is only limited to this “crisis”, and that the very concept of economic liberty is constructed by the wealthy as a self-perpetuating ideology—all, sadly, recent developments— means that Hayek’s message has not been properly understood. Hayek’s fear of centralized authority could be realized by successive administrations who have no commitment to limiting the powers of government. Indeed, the more we abandon our own economic liberties, the farther we trudge down the road to serfdom.

Charles Lipson

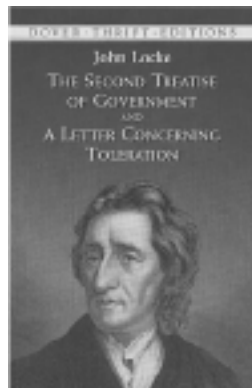
The Second Treatise on Government

by John Locke

No book has influenced me more than John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*. Most *Counterpoint* readers know the volume well. Those who don’t should run straight to the Reg, or, better yet, to the Seminary Co-op.

Rather than summarizing this rich book, I will recount my memories of reading it over several decades. They serve as a yardstick not only for my thoughts about Locke but for my perspectives about politics more broadly.

Recounting those changing ideas reminds me of Mark Twain’s observation about growing up. “When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished by how much he’d learned in seven years.” I



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feel the same way about John Locke. He’s learned a lot over the years.

I first encountered Locke when I was a teenager. I almost said “when I was in high school,” but I went to a rural Mississippi school where our only assigned readings were aging textbooks. We filled them with such erudite comments as, “I hate this garbage.” We had no writing assignments and no required outside readings. Fortunately, those omissions gave us plenty of time for teenage essentials: driving around, looking for fun, and, of course, getting into trouble.

I enjoyed reading, but it was hard to find really nourishing books. We had some around my house, but our town had no bookstores and only a one-room library. Mrs. Pettyjohn ran it with an iron hand and tolerated no smut like Nabokov or Joyce. The closest bookstore was in Memphis, 90 miles away. I asked my grandparents (who easily met the most important criteria for all grandparents: they were loving and indulgent) for a set of the Great Books. They gave me the gift of a lifetime. It was filled with treats: Plato, Hobbes, Gibbon, Dostoyevsky, and more. Those books are still on my library shelves, and not merely as souvenirs of my youth. I continue to use them with pleasure.

Mississippi in the mid-1960s was a perfect time and place to read Locke. After decades of rigid racial segregation, the South was changing—by painful fits and starts, often met with violent backlashes. Blacks were organizing to desegregate schools and lunch counters. Many whites were digging in to preserve their privileges, their way of life. More than a decade after the 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, federal courts were finally ordering school integration. The U.S. marshals sent to enforce those orders were met by defiant local officials, who literally stood in

schoolhouse doors to block them. Southern lawmakers were united in their opposition to the unprecedented new laws that would forever change the civil rights and voting rights of American blacks.

Against this turbulent backdrop, I read Locke with particular urgency, especially his ideas about the limits of citizens’ obligations to their government. Here, I thought, was a trenchant and profound rationale for resisting the South’s worst Jim Crow laws, as its segregationist statutes and customs were known.

Four years later, at college in New Haven, my hair was long, my eyes bloodshot, and my views more radical. I was majoring in politics and economics and had been admitted to a program where I could pretty much read whatever I wanted. Locke was still high on my list, but I was shocked

by how much he had changed. I had remembered him as a radical, ready to challenge oppressive state power. Now he seemed like a smug defender of property rights, which (he said) preceded the state's formation and thus strictly limited its legitimate powers. In my dreamy, romantic way, I knew better. I was, of course, completely clueless. Worse yet, I was clueless that I was clueless.

I am happy to report that with each re-reading, Locke has continued to grow. He has gotten better and better, much like Mark Twain's father. I now read Locke as wisely counseling a balance between citizens' rights (both economic and political) and citizens' collective need for a state that will provide a solid framework of ordered liberty. I am struck by the courage it took to articulate that position, writing in exile, as he did, while James II was busy overreaching his legitimate authority and jailing his opponents.

Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* is almost as important as his *Second Treatise*, and I have spent rewarding time with it as well. It is a significant, although incomplete, step on the contested path to religious freedom and toleration and, ultimately, to free speech.

Over the past few decades, Locke seems to have learned quite a bit. His *Second Treatise of Government*, like all great books, amply rewards another reading—or two or three. It certainly has for me.

Tod Lindberg

Two Cheers for Capitalism by Irving Kristol

Irving Kristol, the godfather of neoconservatism and my first boss after graduating from the College in 1982, died in September at the age of 89. For reasons of personal psyche, I am not much of a memorialist, so I didn't write anything at the time. But the invitation to participate in this *Counterpoint* symposium brought certain facts to mind. First, my enjoyment of Irving's patronage did not begin with my job as an assistant editor at the *Public Interest* in New York, but rather at the U of C, where Irving was the moving force behind providing foundation funding for the first incarnation of *Counterpoint* (and subsequently an

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He co-edited a magazine of the same name during his years in Hyde Park.

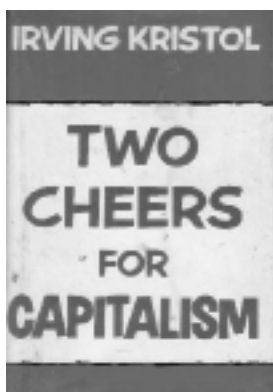
entire wave of alternative right-leaning campus publications). Second, when I arrived on campus in 1978, I had no particular political point of view, but by the time I left, I was a card-carrying neoconservative, having cracked the roster of the farm team at the time, the pages of the *American Spectator*. The reasons for this evolution were several, but in retrospect, the most important text in the process was a collection of essays by Irving Kristol, *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, published by Basic Books in 1978.

Irving famously didn't believe in writing books. He thought they took too long to write and too few people read them; a well-turned essay could reach a much bigger audience more quickly in a magazine or newspaper. (What he really meant was that Irving didn't think Irving should waste his time writing books; he was an ironist of the first rank.) Most of the essays collected in *Two Cheers* appeared in the *Public Interest* or in the *Wall Street Journal*, which was never more distinguished than when Irving was making his monthly op-ed appearance as a member of its Board of Contributors.

Two Cheers provided a robust defense of capitalism and of ordinary bourgeois life at a time when both were in grave peril from a left-wing ideological assault that seemed to be gathering in intensity both at home and abroad. It was Irving's key insight that the capitalists of capitalism and the bourgeoisie of ordinary life were by nature incapable of effectively engaging in exercises in self-justification. The capitalists were too busy trying to make money. The bourgeoisie were devoted to what Edmund Burke called the "little platoons" of society, from family to church to bridge club and bowling league. This imbalance — between the ideas embodied in (but not articulated by) democratic capitalist society on one side, and on the other the hostility of a "New Class" elite that enjoyed unmatched influence over public discourse — was what Irving sought to redress by weighing in on the side of those unable to make their own case for themselves and their way of life.

He won that argument, but it's not his retrospective vindication that validates *Two Cheers for Capitalism*. It's the extraordinary power of his insight and the clarity of his exposition. His unaffected prose and his aphoristic wit made him one of the great essayists of the twentieth century. To read him in "real time," while the disputes in which he engaged were hotly contested, outcome uncertain, was a formative intellectual thrill.

Two Cheers for Capitalism is out of print, but many of the essays in it were subsequently collected in *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea*.



Rediscovering God in America

by Newt Gingrich

Whenever I contemplate political issues, I always try to remind myself of the question, why is it that I believe in the principles that make me interested in politics in the first place? For me, the answer stems from my belief in God. I grew up in a household with no religious or spiritual tradition. My family's values were defined by the Chinese tradition of emphasizing education and devotion to family. I first heard the word "God" in first grade from a friend during recess. My response was to ask him to repeat the amusing one-syllable word so that I could hear it again. For much of my life, a belief in God never played a role in my thinking.

But as I grew older and became interested in history and politics, I became increasingly troubled by a simple but baffling question: on what basis do we judge political actions to be just or moral? Instinctively, I believed in the founding principles of my country – that we are equal and have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as outlined in the Declaration of Independence. But I struggled to find a logical basis for these basic American values. After all, without a belief in a higher power, what reason do we have, other than vanity, to say that one view of morality is more correct than another? Is there any logical difference between our high minded political opinions and those of a child choosing to have dessert over vegetables? I came to the conclusion that there were only two possible answers: either become a moral relativist and treat all conceptions of morality as subjective opinions without any necessary basis in reality, or believe that there must be a source of moral truth that transcends logical explanation – in other words, God.

I began to pay more attention to Declaration's statement that we are endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights. At this time, I came across Newt Gingrich's *Rediscovering God in America*. As I read through the book, I began to realize that a belief in a higher power was absolutely fundamental to the founding fathers' conception of America, and that it has continued to play an important role despite increasing attacks from secular activists. I learned that since 1789, Congress has

started each day with prayers led by the House and Senate chaplains, paid employees of the government. Sessions of the Supreme Court begin with the Marshal announcing, "God save the United States and this honorable court." I discovered that Thomas Jefferson, who famously described the First Amendment as a "wall of separation between church and state" in his letter to the Danbury Baptists, also wrote that his views were "the result of a life of inquiry and reflection, and very different from the anti-Christian system imputed to me by those who know nothing of my opinion." Jefferson, in fact, supported the use of the U.S. Capitol for church services. In fact, Jefferson attended one such service two days after penning his letter to the Baptists.

As a person who has never had any particular religious affiliation, I appreciate that Gingrich takes great pains to point out that our government does not endorse one religious tradition over another. He approaches the topic of divinity in nonsectarian terms, and states only that our nation's government has traditionally acknowledged the importance of religious faith and a belief in God in maintaining liberty and happiness. The founders, he writes, believed that all religions that promote morality are beneficial, and, as he says, "Implicit within this vision of the Founding Fathers is a pluralistic sensibility."

After reading *Rediscovering God in America*, it became clear to me that until quite recently, there was almost no question over whether the authority for our morals stemmed from a belief in some sort of higher power. I realized just how radical the ACLUs and Michael Newdows of our country are, that in order to ban "Under God" and religious displays in public, they would cite an amendment to the Constitution made by the same Congress that passed a law to hire and pay for House and Senate chaplains and allowed church services to be held in the Capitol. By seeking to eliminate references to God from public discourse, secular activists eliminate the source of authority behind our nation's political philosophy. By denying the role of God, they reduce our cherished belief that we are all equal and endowed with inalienable rights from universal truths to vain opinions. Gingrich argues that a belief in God is not an old-fashioned artifact, but the foundation for our nation's great history. As a result of arguments like Gingrich's, I am now able to say that the principles of my political beliefs are firmly rooted in my belief in a higher power.



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Phineas Finn

by Anthony Trollope

The wildly prolific Victorian writer Anthony Trollope was the most worldly of the great novelists of the English language. His books are not about existential struggle, but social struggle. They are not concerned with First Things; they are, rather, studies in life as people actually live it. How they pay bills. How they cope with falling into debt. How they gossip, and how they act when they become the subjects of gossip. How they try to establish their emotional and personal independence from insistent family members, demanding power brokers, and political mentors. How they balance their hunger for standing and influence with the unacceptable moral compromises they are called upon to make to achieve their heart's desire. How to do the right thing when it's the most inconvenient and impractical option, and will cost them dearly.

The Trollope novel that meant the most to me as a student at the University of Chicago and in my twenties was *Phineas Finn*, which I think may be the most vivid and direct book ever written for any young person interested in politics. It tells the story of a good-looking and adept 25 year-old son of an Irish doctor who finds himself, unexpectedly, a member of Parliament and very much in demand as a man about London.

The novel is about the temptations and complications to which he is subjected by his quick and early rise to power. Finn wanders from the lovely hometown girl he left behind and falls successively for two socially prominent women, who are tempted by him but are bound by convention to others. He discovers that it is expensive to be a member of Parliament, that the only way to make a living is to be given a government sinecure, and that the only way to get a government sinecure is to agree to follow the directives of conscienceless party leaders. And he discovers that the only genuinely honest and moral person he meets in London is a somewhat mysterious slightly older woman, the widow of a questionable but very wealthy banker and, of all things, a Jew.

No book ever written gives its reader a better sense of the workings of a legislature; no book has ever captured the insidious interplay of politics and journalism so well;



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no book has ever offered a more cool-eyed portrait of the practical issues raised by marriage and money. Most important, though, no novel I can think of offers a more vivid description of what it means to be young and ambitious and idealistic and how difficult it can be to know what to do to achieve one's aims without sacrificing one's good name and one's good character.

Ajay Ravichandran

After Virtue

by Alasdair MacIntyre

Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* is one of the most influential in a set of late-20th century works of moral philosophy which helped to revive interest in the role of character and community in ethical life. Two aspects of MacIntyre's argument have been especially important in shaping my approach to thinking about politics. He accounts for the binding force of moral prescriptions in a manner that carries important implications for our understanding of the basis for the social order and demonstrates that the gradual disappearance of the worldview that sustains this force lies at the root of many of the ills afflicting modern political life.

MacIntyre contends that the binding force of morality can only be accounted for with reference to a teleological understanding of human nature, an understanding that sees human lives as directed toward a specific end or purpose that is the only way for them to actualize their potential. A teleological account of morality is one in which moral requirements bind us because acting in accordance with them is part of what it means to achieve one's purpose in living, just as, say, a soldier must maintain physical fitness in order to achieve the ends to which his profession is directed. While this sort of account has its origins in Aristotle, MacIntyre's version of it is uniquely effective in demonstrating that no competing approach to explaining the binding character of moral requirements can successfully ground them in non-moral claims.

The consequences of this understanding of morality for the nature of ethical practice provide a basis for important political conclusions. Since moral requirements

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are injunctions to orient one's whole life toward the fulfillment of one's purpose as a human, character and dispositions must play an important part in any effort to understand and meet them. Our natural inclinations do not seem to point uniformly toward right conduct, so our characters must be shaped in the appropriate way. The cultivation of character, in turn, requires sustained and intimate contact with moral exemplars that can only occur in small-scale social settings. Thus, families and small, close-knit communities are necessary parts of any sustainable political order because they help to provide citizens with the capacity to respond to moral requirements.

MacIntyre posits that the gradual displacement of a teleological understanding of human nature from Western thought has debased political life in several important ways. Because the binding force of moral requirements cannot be explained rationally without such an understanding, its absence has created a situation in which we still feel the force of such requirements but cannot account for it. This condition has made prevalent an understanding of morality which MacIntyre calls "emotivism"; this term refers to a cluster of positions united by the view that moral requirements only bind those who choose to accept their foundational premises (which cannot be justified rationally) based on arbitrary preference. Widespread belief in emotivism leads participants in public debate to abandon any hope of truly persuading their opponents (since there are no objectively valid standards to which they can appeal) in favor of efforts to manipulate or coerce them into agreement; MacIntyre captures this phenomenon in his famous remark that "[m]odern politics is civil war carried on by other means." Additionally, the feeling that fundamental moral questions are unanswerable to which emotivism gives rise leads people to view such issues as secondary in importance to debates about the relationship of means to ends. *After Virtue* thus enables us to understand the origin of many of the most vexing features of modern political life. The dominance of emotivism is exemplified in the absence of consensus on even the most fundamental moral issues, the increasingly vicious character of public debate, and the emphasis on technocratic policy debates at the expense of the concern with the best way of ordering our lives together that defined Aristotle's conception of politics.

MacIntyre's argument helps us understand what sort of political change we should work toward. His understanding of emotivism implies that it cannot be dislodged from its commanding position in the public square through argument. Because the claim that lies



at the heart of emotivism purports to be necessarily true of all moral argument, someone who contended that his or her moral framework could demonstrate its falsity would be seen as merely expressing another arbitrary preference. Furthermore, his account of morality suggests that both real moral discourse and moral practice can only be sustained in a society characterized by a certain shared worldview and the presence of specific pre-political institutions. For MacIntyre, then, cultural reform is a necessary prerequisite for political regeneration; thoughtful conservatives surveying our increasingly dysfunctional public life would do well to consider this possibility.

Jeremy Rozansky

The Closing of the American Mind

by Allan Bloom

If man is a political animal, then understanding ourselves, or, better yet, our souls, is the key to understanding politics. In this way, Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* is a supreme meditation on our politics, and on us. At its core is a conception of politics so alien to our coverage of Washington or our teaching of government, yet also so obviously true: our nation, our body politic is a capable of both character and vibrancy. We have our principles and aims, functions and incapacities. And, like any body, we are nourished. We are nourished through what we call education: the cultural transmission, the forming, and the sustaining of each generation. Professor Bloom's claim is that our nation is sick, sick in the soul—and he takes us through a Tocquevillian tour using education as his vista.

Bloom presents to us an America ready to inherit our unipolar world. He is looking right back at us. The only obviously antiquated remark might be his use of Mick Jagger as the ultimate drag-queen/taste-depressing celebrity (there is far worse in our generation). But that we have become desensitized is, quite simply, the point. So Professor Bloom at once awakens us to our senses and tries to put them back together.

At first, he explores the realities of his students' lives. Cultural relativism and openness have self-invalidated

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our national project and submitted to what represents nothing more than a Will to Power. Our numbness to the spirited things has left us superficial and at sea from the discovery of reality. We lack the basic sense for the sublime. We view the past and their works as relevant only insofar as they inform our curiosity about history and its alien peoples. Our liberations, sexual and feminist, have transformed our erotic lives into something that is, from the former, passionless and routine and, from the force of the feminists, abstract, contrived, and nature-forgetting. Likewise, individualism has crushed the sustaining, self-forgetting bonds of family, friendship, and love, seen in, among other things, our divorce rate. Professor Bloom takes the labors to show how our rhetoric subtly reflects this. In his Delphic way, Professor Bloom tells his audience to “know thyself” and proceeds to tell us that we are corrupted to the bone.

The first of the three parts of Bloom’s book is the most read and most talked about. This is his indictment; the next two parts consist of the diagnosis. The serious student of politics must read all three: he must reflect, be broken down by that reflection, have the yearning for the revivification of his soul, and seek the answer to what went wrong.

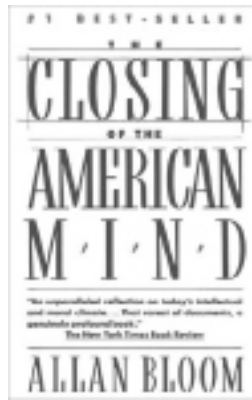
Bloom’s second part “Nihilism, American Style,” presents how the steady infiltration of German Philosophy has changed American life. The so-called “fact-value” distinction is critical here. There is no truth, no good life, nothing to search for, nothing to rightly call evil, just “values”: subjective, arbitrary, weightless. But is nihilism reconcilable with democracy? This is, quite possibly, the chief question of our present regime and perhaps the question of Western history since the failure of the French Revolution. Professor Bloom points out the stakes of our nihilism and the force-fed, profane, and banal politics to which the American-nihilist must succumb. Nihilism is the undoing of liberal democracy, and Bloom does not shy away from the powerful, yet believable Weimar comparisons.

The way toward a resurrection of a serious life is pointed to in the last chapter of the second part: “Our Ignorance.” We must become aware of the great questions: reason-revelation, good-evil, body-soul, self-other, and more alternatives—tensions that animate the soul. To reconstitute the questions will require a reconstitution of university education. Professor Bloom spends the last third describing all the specific problems in the context of a lengthy theoretical history of education, from Socrates to The Sixties. The project is, in simple terms, to think like the ancients: avoiding specialization and relativism, knowing our ignorance, and asking soul-

wrenching questions.

Professor Bloom uses broad and intricate brush strokes and an electric wit which balances the seeming stiffness of his terms (a neat trick to keep his modern audience mesmerized). Most of all, *The Closing of the American Mind* teems with sincerity. He loves his students and he would be mournful should they lose their souls.

Bloom’s is a book to be read before and after college. The first time it harvests a disposition—a healthy skepticism to the university’s notions of political life. After one year, its intellectual history becomes more accessible; its narrative can convince because one has wrestled with Plato, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and the contemporary college crowd. One can see the links, the steady transitions, the advance of nihilism and its repugnant consequences. One can yearn for a soul, see how it has been undone, and then, maybe, one can pick up Professor Bloom’s translation of *The Republic* and start from scratch.



George Saad

The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand

As an adolescent matures into adulthood, the degree to which he sacrifices his natural youthful idealism and accept a strict dichotomy between moral ideals and practical reality is commonly taken to be the degree to which he has successfully learned to cope with a cold, alien adult world. Facing an adult culture in which a rigid adherence to a romantic view of life is likely to be the object of derision, most college students, regrettably, conclude that loyalty to such values as truth, integrity, and personal pride is the path to practical martyrdom rather than the essence of a successful life, and either join in the hazy mediocrity of popular culture or the cynically irrelevant obscurantism of academia. Looking with confusion upon a culture without moral commitment at the age of 17, I picked up a copy of Ayn Rand’s *The Fountainhead*. Vividly, convincingly, and powerfully presenting a vision of the world in which morality is not a disembodied opponent to practical success, but the necessary foundation of all human achievement, it gripped and stirred me at a time when disillusionment too often quenches the deepest passions of youth.

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The Fountainhead presents virtue as a fully natural exercise, one fully practicable and, moreover, necessary to human endeavors. The novel's ideal man who practices this virtue is Howard Roark, an architect consumed by his desire to plan and build the best buildings possible, whose struggle illustrates how allegiance to the truth of one's creative vision is the prime mover of all human advancement. Against the usual portrayal of the egoist as an unfeeling, manipulative brute, Roark exemplifies the fully cultivated self, legitimately proud of his character and accomplishments. He wants to find the best methods of building, to create the best buildings, to achieve the pride—the worthiness of being—that comes from having successfully understood and conquered nature. Roark's virtues are not a fight against his natural capacities, but the fullest exercise of them. Where faith is thought of as a virtue, Roark's sublime happiness lies in his supreme rationality and understanding. Where altruism is held to be the highest moral precept, Roark does not aim to give values away, but to create them. Where piety is considered a mark of reverence, Roark does not submit to anyone, respecting himself as worthy of facing reality alone. He represents the natural potential of man reached in its fullest extent; he does not parasitically feed off the work of others or substitute their judgment for his, but he applies his own resources to achieve his own ends, heartily engaging in the essentially self-generative course of life without corruption.

Having thus framed morality in the context of this virtuous egoism, Rand shows that the false ideals of collectivism cannot achieve life, and can only produce parasitic relationships of mutual corruption. Peter Keating, a fellow architect who seeks status above the integrity of his work, selflessly submits himself to the consensus of his contemporaries, and achieves momentary commercial success. However, without confidence in his own judgment or ability, he ends up a pathetic favor seeker who, having lost public support, cannot hide from himself the knowledge he has squandered his life's potential by placing prestige over personal pride. He is manipulated into this position by Ellsworth Toohey, a social activist who knows that, in order to achieve his egalitarian utopia, he must prop up Keating and attack Roark, so that men do not think of virtue as excellence, but mediocrity. He knows that his socialistic vision cannot be achieved in a world that believes in individual human greatness, and so, in a candid moment after his designs have failed, he explains to Keating his strategy: "Don't set out to raze all shrines—you'll frighten men. Enshrine mediocrity, and the shrines are razed." In attempting to live by the force of the opinion of others alone, the life-

affirming creative genius of Roark is not an inspiration for Keating and Toohey, but something which must be quelled out entirely, setting them against the driving force of human life itself. Thus Rand shows that the conventional values of conformity and egalitarianism embodied in Keating and Toohey are in fact destructive of man's most healthy desires, to think and create, so that evil is not a profitable temptation, as almost all moralists hold, but a course of self-destruction not in anyone's real self-interest.

With millennia of religious teaching that the good is an unnatural imposition on the world by God, a cross to be carried rather than a life to be lived, our moral thinking has lost sight of Aristotle's insight in Book 4 of the *Nicomachean ethics* that a virtuous man must take pleasure from virtue, rather than perform it indifferently or out of painful duty. Having come of age in a political culture in which the "progressives" aim to strangle human economic productivity out of a sense of duty to the poor, and the conservatives aim to shackle the freedom of the human spirit in bondage to irrational religious dogma, *The Fountainhead* opened my eyes to a vibrant, long neglected philosophical alternative, approaching morality not as sacrifice to secular others or subservience to supernatural deities, but the pleasing, creative achievement of a life worth living. The man who quietly thinks and creates, unflinchingly loyal to the truth and seeking his own betterment, is the unsung hero responsible for every human achievement. Long lost in the worship of charismatic demagogues and absent gods, *The Fountainhead* is a long overdue celebration of the sanctity of the individual human life, and a resoundingly real inspiration to actualize the potentials of one's own.



Michael Talent

Reflections on the Revolution in France

by Edmund Burke

There are very few books in the conservative pantheon more important in underlining the importance of tradition than *Reflections on the Revolution in France* by Edmund Burke. His defense of tradition and custom is logical and poetic. One of the most powerful lines

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concerning the state and its institutions is found in his book: “As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.” In one sentence, Burke provides a provocative argument against presumptuous societal change. The institutions and traditions of a society are a birthright—passed down from generation to generation. These customs and institutions, such as constitutional government or religion, are what keep human vices in check. Destroy or radically alter these institutions, Burke argues, and human nature, in all of its wickedness, is unleashed. In addition, the organic evolution of these traditions makes them irreplaceable. As Burke points out, the British government, with all of its guarantees of liberty and the rule of law, was the product of centuries of growth. Therefore, humans need to approach their societal traditions with care, and not seek to change them radically. Humility needs to be a hallmark of society; no generation should ever be so proud as to think that any they can radically remake society for the better.

This insight into the necessity of custom is driven by Burke’s observations of the French Revolution. The wanton destruction of custom during the revolution appalls Burke. When he wrote *Reflections*, the French Revolution was in full swing, with the mobs of the sans-culottes opening defying and destroying the remnants of the old order. Burke predicted that the destruction of traditions and institutions would lead to the destruction of any liberty and order that the French people enjoyed—an insight that would come true with the reigns of Robespierre and Napoleon.

However, setting *Reflections* in the French Revolution

does not make the work dated. Burke views the French Revolution not as a contained phenomenon, but as a potential danger to all civilized countries. Burke can see the threat of anarchic mobs in the streets, and it lends his book a passion that is missing in other works of political science. As a result, *Reflections* is not merely a dry polemic of observations and theories regarding revolution and

society. Rather, it is a dynamic defense of the need for institutions and customs to contain human nature and preserve liberty—values that grew up out of Western Civilization. This defense of Western Civilization, and its values, is the essence of *Reflections*. At its core, the book is one of the greatest defenses of Western values, a timeless classic. What Burke argues for in *Reflections* would have been just as pertinent in 1917 against Lenin, 1939 against Hitler, or even now, in 2010 against radical Islam. The immortality of *Reflections*

comes from its defense of the freedom and liberty that is institutionalized in Western society as a whole—not just the traditions and customs of monarchial France. Destroy these institutions, Burke argued, and you destroy liberty.

Because of its importance not just in defining conservatism, but also in passionately defending Western Civilization, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* should be a necessary read for any person—conservative or liberal. I will not say it is an easy read, the book is quite deep and many passages will have to be read multiple times, but it is a rewarding process. Reading Burke is as much a maturing process as it is a learning process. After completing it, though, the reader finds himself with a fuller grasp of conservatism and its concepts. In short, a complete civic education should contain a solid understanding of the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. **Gp**



Change

Two years after the election of Barack Obama, the GOP appears headed for a big win.

By Michael Talent

Much has changed in the year following the inauguration of President Barack Obama. Elected as the “hope and change” candidate, but mostly as the candidate who was *not* George W. Bush, President Obama promised to end the vicious partisanship of the Bush years with clarion calls a new politics of post-partisanship and hope. Policy can be changed, the President found out. But American democracy, warts and all, is here to stay.

And, as of now, American democracy is working against the president and his party. The stimulus, which provided little to no growth for about a trillion dollars of debt, and the healthcare debacle have resulted in an almost constant disapproval rate around 50% for the president. The Republican Party, almost despite itself, appears poised to make strides in the 2010 midterm elections.

In this atmosphere, what should people expect in the 2010 midterms? The answer, with several months yet to go, is a Republican tide. Polls show the Republicans leading on the generic ballot—the single greatest predictor of success in congressional elections—by margins not seen since the GOP acquired fifty-four House seats and eight Senate seats in 1994. What follows is a race-by-race preview of some of the more interesting races so the reader will have a guide to a summer and fall of politicking.

The Races:

Missouri Senate: A “bellwether” state, Missouri has been trending right in recent years, going for McCain in 2008, albeit by only one point. In 2010, Republican Congressman Roy Blunt and Democratic Secretary of State Robin Carnahan will compete for Kit Bond’s vacant Senate seat. Current polls show Blunt consistently ahead of Carnahan, one of the latest—at the time of this writing—puts Blunt ahead by eight points at 50% to Carnahan’s 42%. (In full disclosure, the author will become a staffer for the Blunt campaign in June.)

A Republican, Blunt was the former House minority whip and has served in the House since 1996. Two years

ago, Roy Blunt’s record would have been a liability, as it connected him with the unpopular Bush administration and the Republican Congress. In addition, he has been linked with disgraced former lobbyist Jack Abramoff. While this doomed many a Republican in the past four years, it looks like this may not affect Blunt. It remains to be seen if the electorate has moved on from the Bush years, and is now focused on the Democrats and Obama. Considering the lack of issues that the Democrats have to run on—basically having used up all of the political capital they had in 2008 on healthcare and spending and therefore losing their credibility on almost every issue—expect Carnahan to talk incessantly on Blunt’s background.

Carnahan is the polar opposite of Blunt. She is now serving her second term as Secretary of State, which also happens to be her only political office. This lack of a record will exacerbate the frequency and vehemence of her attacks on Blunt, since she lacks true substance to run on. Blunt, on the other hand, will seek to link her to Obama and the healthcare bill, which is even more unpopular in Missouri than it is nationally. It will be interesting to see how Carnahan handles this charge, especially since her brother, Representative Russ Carnahan, is a staunch supporter of the bill. For now, she has wisely laid low, trying to distance herself from President Obama and his policies, even avoiding an appearance at a fundraising event in which President Obama was an honored guest. Expect this race to become real ugly, real fast.

Ohio Senate: Senator George Voinovitch’s retirement has opened up an interesting race in the state, one that would have gone to the Democrats just a year ago. Ohio is similar to Missouri: as Gregg Keller, executive director of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, points out, both states are “bellwethers with an open Senate seat.” In fact, Ohio is probably a better indicator than Missouri; unlike Missouri, the state went for Obama in 2008, giving him a five-point margin of victory over McCain. The GOP candidate, former Congressman Rob Portman, is in a statistical tie with his challenger, Lieutenant Governor Lee Fisher. Fisher will try to stick

Portman, a former Bush administration official, with Bush's electoral legacy.

The Ohio elections embody the classic political adage, "It's the economy, stupid." Ohio has an unemployment rate of 11% and, as Keller points out, "high unemployment is always bad for the party in power." Portman knows this. Look for him to exploit the dissatisfaction that Ohio voters have with the Democrats economic politics, expect the Stimulus and the resultant debt to loom large, no pun intended.

Florida Senate: This section was going to be about the Florida primary, since it was a matchup of a moderate Republican, Charlie Crist, with a staunch conservative, Marco Rubio. However, Crist is now running as an independent. After all, there was almost no way that he was going to win the primary, polls had Rubio ahead of him by 20 points. It makes sense that Rubio would win the primary; outside of more liberal areas like New England or California, Republican primary voters will often choose the most conservative, yet electable, candidate.

Given this logic, it is easy to understand how Rubio went from underdog to running Crist out of the race in a year. He has proven himself an electable conservative, while Crist has been known to embrace liberal positions and politicians. Now that Crist is gone, Rubio can focus on the general election, running against two candidates who would support President Obama. Watch as he draws comparisons between the two: "A vote for Crist or Meeks is a vote for out-of-control government spending!"

What makes the Florida Senate race noteworthy is the Tea Party movement coming out in droves to support Rubio. This reflects a national phenomenon, with candidates like Rand Paul—the son of Congressman Ron Paul who is running for the US Senate in Kentucky—and Chuck DeVore running to compete against Barbara Boxer in California, having their origins in the Tea Party. The fact that these candidates are running as Republicans, not as a third party, is indicative that the Tea Party movement is in effect a Republican movement. Keller speculates that the Tea Partiers are actually Republicans who stayed home in 2006 and 2008, and are now returning to the fold. Given the general discontent about the current

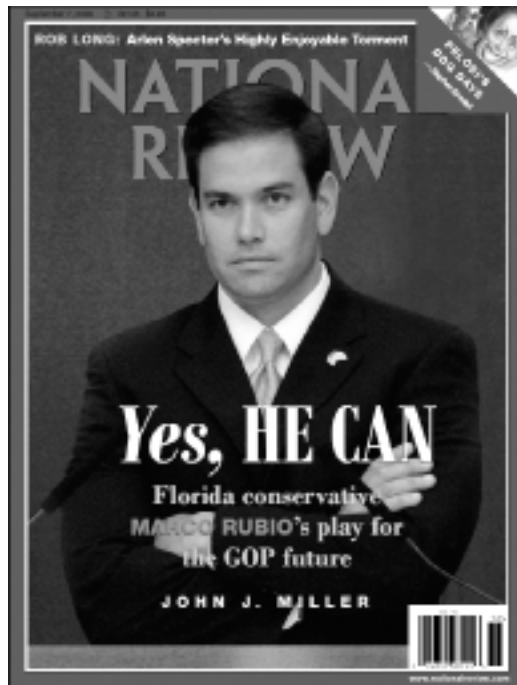
administration, expect the Tea Party movement to continue until Election Day and come out in droves to vote Republican.

Nevada Senate: There will be a great deal of satisfaction on the right if Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid loses in November—a very likely scenario. According to McSherry, Reid is facing a worse situation than Tom Daschle—the former Senate Democrat leader—faced when he lost his seat in South Dakota in 2004. In the past, Reid has been elected by playing down his liberal credentials, but this year, he will be the standard-bearer for a very unpopular President and his unpopular liberal policies. The general discontent about the economy, health care, and direction of the country can all be placed, not unfairly, at Reid's door. Current polls all have him down by significant margins against all of his potential opponents, many of whom have less than ideal qualifications. Harry Reid will not be missed.

The situation in Nevada is representative of a wider, anti-Democrat incumbent trend. Senate incumbents, while not invulnerable to defeat in elections, should not be as far down as Reid is—especially if they are part of the leadership and especially if they are a four-term incumbent. The problem for Reid is that independents are now flocking to a reenergized Republican party. It is the mirror opposite of 2006 and 2008. The "moderate" Democrats who were elected in red states are going to be shown the door.

California Senate: Very unexpectedly, Senator Barbara Boxer is facing a tough election. Current polls only show her beating the GOP frontrunner, Tom Campbell, by two points, a statistical tie. The other mainstream candidate, Carly Fiorina, is down 42-38 against Senator Boxer. Both of them would be very hard candidates for Boxer to beat—Campbell is a pro-choice moderate and Fiorina is a woman with deep pockets.

But why would Boxer, a liberal senator from a liberal state, have such a challenge? The answer, according to Mike McSherry, executive vice-president at the consulting firm IGR, is that "voting ideological is a luxury"—one that Californians are increasingly unable to afford. In



Marco Rubio, Florida's GOP Candidate for Senate and, as dubbed by *National Review*, a "rockstar of the right."

a state with a 12.6% unemployment rate and an almost bankrupt government, the Republican tide will be strong. Boxer does not have a great history with independent voters. Perhaps they find her too liberal, or just too darn condescending. Boxer also faces a primary challenge from independently-wealthy, idiosyncratic liberal blogger Mickey Kaus—which adds a new level of intrigue to what will be a fun few months out west.

As a conservative with deep pockets, Fiorina would probably be the best candidate to challenge Boxer in the fall. However, the presence of Tea Party candidate Chuck DeVore will split the conservative vote, and could give the nomination to the moderate Campbell. Campbell is definitely a solid candidate, but may not have the money to be competitive on television in the months leading up to the election, and considering the liberal electoral history of California, the national Republicans will more than likely send their funds to more promising races. So, depending on the primary results, Boxer may just pull this one out, as a Republican tide cannot make up for candidate invisibility. However, even if the Republicans lose, the fact that the California Senate will most likely be close speaks volumes about the national mood about Democrat policies.

Here are a few other races to keep an eye on, in no particular order:

Michigan 1st district: This is Representative Bart Stupak's seat. Ostensibly, he retired to spend more time with his family—a decision that coincided with his decision to cave on health care. Of course, the skyrocketing dissatisfaction after he acceded to Obama, Pelosi, and Reid maybe had something to do with it. Expect that dissatisfaction to make this seat a prime Republican pickup opportunity.

Missouri 3rd district: While Robin Carnahan is running for Senate, her brother, Russ Carnahan, is running for reelection in the House. While this seat is usually considered safe for the Democrats, Carnahan has not handled the healthcare bill well and his challenger, Ed Martin, is energetic and visible. This is the sort of race that Republicans are finding across the country. They need to win races like this to get the majority back in the House.

New York 29th district: There should be a special election to replace Congressman Eric Massa, who had

to retire after engaging in a “tickle fight” with a staffer. Governor Patterson has delayed on setting a date for it, since it appears the Republican, Tom Reed, would win. But New York Democrat politics cannot stall the November elections, and this seat will probably go Republican along with four or five other New York districts.

Michigan governor: That Michigan is in bad shape economically is no shock. That Michigan voters appear to be blaming the Democrats is. Republican pickup.

Ohio governor: Like Michigan, Ohio's economy is in the dumps. With the Democrats controlling the state house and governor's mansion, there will be a lot of frustration with the party. The governor's race is close, but a GOP pick-up is possible. As of now, the Republican, John Kasich polls 46% to Democrat governor Ted Strickland's 45%. The tide that will give Portman the Senate seat might give Kasich the mansion over the uninspiring Strickland.

Connecticut governor: This is a very close race, with polls swinging between Republican Thomas Foley—the frontrunner for the GOP nomination—and his two potential opponents: Ned Lamont and Don Malloy. A GOP victory in November ensures that the Connecticut governor's mansion stays in Republican hands.

Colorado Senate: Colorado is a swing state that has been trending Democrat in recent years. Republicans are looking to defeat Senator Michael Bennet—who was appointed to finish Ken Salazar's term when he accepted the position of Secretary of Interior—and reverse the recent leftward trend of Colorado.

Indiana and North Dakota Senate: The retirement of Senator Evan Bayh and Byron Dorgan were huge blows to Democrats. Expect these seats to go to the winners of the Republican primaries of the respective states.

Right now, the final tally should excite Republicans. The GOP will likely make sizeable gains in the House, potentially regaining control of it, and will pick up 6-8 seats in the Senate. In the aftermath, we might see a dramatically different political process and begin readying for 2012. **Q**

Dedicated to Robert Lerner, z"1 (1953 - 2010)

**Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Not for a train attendant,
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.
-Robert Burns**

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