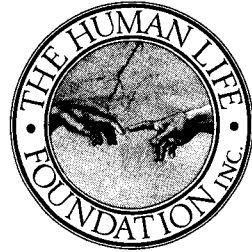


the HUMAN LIFE REVIEW



FALL 1981

Featured in this issue:

John T. Noonan, Jr. on Pain in the Unborn
Susan Austin on . . . Health for the New Woman
George Gilder on Faith & Expertise
Ellen Wilson on What Kind of Liberty?
James Hitchcock on Guilt and the
Moral Revolution

Special Bonus Feature

Joseph Sobran on C.S. Lewis

Also in this issue:

Prof. Charles A. Akemann • Irving Kristol • W. Shepherdson Abell

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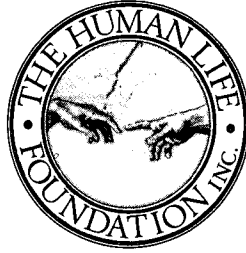
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INTRODUCTION

“OUR NORMAL WAY OF knowing whether someone is in pain is for the person to use language affirming ... suffering. . . . Infants, the unborn, and animals have no conceptual language in which to express their suffering and its degree.”

Thus John T. Noonan, in our lead article, reminds us of what we all know. But as he points out, the pain “experienced by the object of an abortion” is rarely mentioned. Most if not all of us would consider it . . . , well, dehumanizing to ignore a baby’s pain, or an animal’s. In the latter case, our nation has long taken pride in laws demanding “humane” treatment, especially in the slaughterhouse. But not in the abortorium. Professor Noonan adduces what he believes are the reasons why, and suggests that, were we to empathize with the pain of the unborn, we might well find it intolerable.

Grim thoughts? Yes, but fitting ones, we think, to open this, the issue that completes our first seven years of publication. During those years we have often been asked, and asked ourselves, if there was yet more to say — anything “new” — on an issue that we have covered more thoroughly than any other journal in the land (if not in the world!). Professor Noonan demonstrates that there is a great deal more, even if it is not new. But then, to echo Dr. Johnson, men more often need to be reminded of the good than to be instructed in it.

Next we welcome a new talent. Susan Austin (in her first published article) also finds fresh aspects of the abortion issue, here related to “Women’s” concerns. Again, everybody knows that the books she describes are best-sellers nowadays. But how many of us think about what they are really saying to their millions of readers? Miss Austin has thought about it pretty hard, and outlines for us here why and how such books become weapons in the hands of those bent on redefining traditional values. It’s an impressive job of what might be called interpretive reporting.

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Next we have Mr. George Gilder, who hardly needs an introduction. His seminal book *Wealth and Poverty* was surely the most widely-discussed book of the past year. We heard him relate his controversial economic and social ideas to “our” concerns — abortion, the family, etc. — in Washington last June. He shared the platform with Mother Teresa, which alone made the day memorable. It also provided a pleasant, symbolic juxtaposition: the advocates of the best in both wealth and poverty. We asked him if he would be good enough to edit some of his remarks for us; what you have here is the result. Needless to say, we wish we had a great deal more of it, and hope we will, in the future.

Miss Ellen Wilson is by now well known to our readers as an essayist of dazzling grace and insight. She has maintained the same even freshness that distinguished her first contribution to this journal, which appeared in our Fall, 1977 issue. (We assume our readers will be happy to know that we have collected her first dozen pieces in book form; for information about how to get a copy, please see the inside back cover of this issue.) Here, she handles themes and ideas that are in many ways far from her previous concerns, and yet she returns, as always, to her fundamental questions, beautifully framed, e.g., is it not true that “One of the tragic missteps of this century was the substitution of the philosophy of ‘doing as you please’ for that of ‘doing unto others.’ The first is scarcely worth living for, and certainly not worth dying for”?

Again, we think the wider focus is fitting here. For seven long years we *have* given you, dear reader, a heavy diet of articles (albeit the best we could find) on our “life issues.” You deserve some special treat in return. Joseph Sobran is just the man to provide it. He too is familiar — indeed, no other contributor has appeared so regularly in these pages. His interests are encyclopedic, and his touch sure on almost any subject, not least literary ones. Here, he performs a labor of love on the late great C. S. Lewis. We’ve never run anything like it (and you may never have *read* anything quite like it!). And, different as it is, there is much that will remind you of our usual concerns. Lewis himself rarely strayed far from such subjects. We think you’ll find it fascinating reading.

Our closing article is yet another unusual one, by another regular contributor, Professor James Hitchcock. Like Sobran, Hitchcock writes on a wide range of subjects — history, social issues, politics — for many publications. Here, he explores the role of guilt as a motivating force in the strange turnabout that has brought to the guilty the kind of public honors once reserved for the defenders (if not the practitioners) of virtue. Consider: “Good preachers have always spoken in the first person in condemning sin, and it is finally irrelevant whether moralists themselves have clean hands. The purpose [of “the Playboy Philosophy”] is not to deepen public awareness of sin by revealing more of it, but to deny all sin

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by implying that virtue itself is not real. The moralist is subjected to scrutiny not as a flawed individual but precisely as a representative of the moral order. What is held up to ridicule is not the man but the morality which he represents.”

The result, Hitchcock makes clear, is devastating: “Parents have been told that they have no responsibility to their unborn children, and children in turn refuse to recognize responsibilities to their parents. [They] are systematically instructed that they have no higher duty than self-fulfillment . . .” But that of course is just the kind of thing Ellen Wilson is talking about; and Sobran quotes Lewis making many a similar point — once again, it all comes together off at the end.

As usual, we have included what we hope are some interesting appendices. Also as usual, they form no particular pattern: we try to include items that the reader might not have seen elsewhere, or that few *could* see, which seem to bear, directly or indirectly, on the articles we publish. For instance, Appendix A is a short, stark projection of the number of *late* abortions, i.e., those performed at or after the time the baby might be “viable” outside his mother’s womb. With Noonan’s article in mind, the bare numbers are indeed painful reminders (surely, for the surprising number killed just prior to normal birth, pain is *the* experience of their brief sojourn among their fellow humans?).

Appendix B is unusual in several ways. When we began publishing in 1975, we doubt that *The New Republic* was publishing many reviews such as Mr. Irving Kristol’s (although *he* may well have been writing similar things); clearly things are changing, very possibly because the “Women’s” books Susan Austin describes are producing a reaction. In which case Ellen Wilson is again relevant here. And Hitchcock. Appendix C is a newspaper editorial that confirms George Gilder’s point: the “experts” — not least our judges, who now claim *expertise* in an incredible range of affairs — have lost sight of how things really work, and of how real people really behave. To the extent that, here, even defenders of legalized abortion can see that the Supreme Court’s “social engineering” has made things worse, not better.

Appendix D is not to be missed. It is vivid proof that the experts themselves are befuddled by their own claimed expertise, yet cannot resist *using* it simply because it is available. The needless horror could have been easily avoided *via* the moral maxim “When in doubt, don’t.” Instead, the experts in this case literally froze their doubts — new medical technology used to produce permanent indecision. A quite good example of the dilemmas C. S. Lewis predicted.

We conclude as we began, with another piece on that most agonizing human dilemma, abortion. Appendix E is another example of a trend not visible when we began this journal, i.e., then, pro-abortion newspa-

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pers (and the late Washington *Star* was certainly that) rarely published anything *against* it. Today they do, if only — as you will see — in part. We confidently expect such trends to continue during our eighth year of publication, and beyond. Because we believe that this review has — in part — helped make a fair debate unavoidable. If that is so, then the recompense exceeds the price we've paid.

J.P. MCFADDEN
Editor

The Experience of Pain by the Unborn

John T. Noonan, Jr.

ONE ASPECT OF the abortion question which has not been adequately investigated is the pain experienced by the object of an abortion. The subject has clearly little attraction for the pro-abortion party, whose interest lies in persuading the public that the unborn are not human and even in propagating the view that they are not alive. Indeed, in a remarkable judicial opinion Judge Clement Haynsworth has written, "The Supreme Court declared the fetus in the womb is not alive . . ." ¹ Judge Haynsworth's statement is merely a resolution of the oxymoron "potential life," which is the term chosen by the Supreme Court of the United States to characterize the unborn in the last two months of pregnancy. ² Before that point, the unborn are referred to by the Court as alive only according to one "theory of life"; ³ and as the phrase "potential life" appears to deny the actuality of life, Judge Haynsworth does not exaggerate in finding that, by definition of our highest court, the unborn are not alive. From this perspective, it is folly to explore the pain experienced. Does a stone feel pain? If you know as a matter of definition that the being who is aborted is not alive, you have in effect successfully bypassed any question of its suffering.

It is more difficult to say why the investigation has not been pursued in depth by those opposed to abortion. The basic reason, I believe, is the sense that the pain inflicted by an abortion is of secondary importance to the intolerable taking of life. The right to life which is fundamental to the enjoyment of every other human right has been the focus. That suffering may be experienced by those who are losing their lives has been taken for granted, but it has not been the subject of special inquiry or outrage. The assumption has been that if the killing is stopped, the pain attendant on it

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will stop too, and it has not seemed necessary to consider the question of pain by itself. In this respect, those opposed to abortion have been, like most medical researchers, concentrating on a cure not for the pain but for the disease.

There are good reasons, however, for looking at the question of pain by itself. We live in a society of highly developed humanitarian feeling, a society likely to respond to an appeal to empathy. To those concerned with the defense of life, it makes no difference whether the life taken is that of a person who is unconscious or drugged or drunk or in full possession of his senses; a life has been destroyed. But there are those who either will not respond to argument about killing because they regard the unborn as a kind of abstraction, or who will not look at actual photographs of the aborted because they find the fact of death too strong to contemplate, but who nonetheless might respond to evidence of pain suffered in the process of abortion. In medical research it has proved useful to isolate pain as a phenomenon distinct from disease, so it may be useful here.⁴

The Analogy of Animals

The best indication that attention to the pain of the unborn may have social consequences is afforded by the example of humanitarian activity on behalf of animals. Let me offer three cases where substantial reform was effected by concentrating on the pain the animals experienced. In each case it was accepted that animals would die, whatever reform was enacted; an appeal on their behalf could not be based on an aversion to putting animals to death. The only forceful argument was that the way in which the animals were killed was cruel because it was painful to the animals.

The first case is that of trapping animals by gins — traps that spring shut on the animal, wound it, and hold it to die over a probably protracted period. A campaign was launched in England against this method of trapping in 1928, and after thirty years Parliament responded by banning such trapping.⁵ A second case is the butchering of cattle for meat. The way in which this was for centuries carried out was painful to the animal being slaughtered. A typical modern statute is the law in California which became effective only in 1968 — all cattle are to be rendered insensible by any

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means that is “rapid and effective” before being “cut, shackled, hoisted, thrown or cast.” Or, if the animals are being slaughtered for kosher use, their consciousness must be destroyed by “the simultaneous and instantaneous severance of the carotid arteries with a sharp instrument.”⁶ A third case: a 1972 California statute regulates in detail the methods by which impounded dogs or cats may be killed. If carbon monoxide is used, the gas chamber must be lighted so that the animal’s collapse can be monitored. A newborn dog or cat may not be killed other than by drugs, chloroform, or a decompression chamber. The use of nitrogen gas to kill an older dog or cat is regulated in terms of an oxygen reduction to be reached within sixty seconds.⁷ Each of these laws has a single goal: to assure that the animal not suffer as it dies.

It may seem paradoxical, if not perverse, to defend the unborn by considering what has been done for animals. But the animal analogies are instructive on three counts: they show what can be done if empathy with suffering is awakened. They make possible an *a fortiori* case — if you will do this for an animal, why not for a child? And they exhibit a successful response to the most difficult question when the pain of a being without language is addressed — how do we know what is being experienced?

The Inference of Pain

Our normal way of knowing whether someone is in pain is for the person to use language affirming that he or she is suffering.⁸ This behavior is taken as a sign, not necessarily infallible but usually accurate, that the person is in pain. By it we can not only detect the presence of pain but begin to measure its threshold, its intensity, and its tolerability. Infants, the unborn, and animals have no conceptual language in which to express their suffering and its degree.

Human infants and all animals brought up by parents will cry and scream.⁹ Every human parent becomes adept at discriminating between a baby’s cry of pain and a baby’s cry of fatigue or of anxiety. How do we distinguish? By knowing that babies are human, by empathizing, by interpreting the context of the cry. We also proceed by trial and error: this cry will end if a pain is removed, this cry will end if the baby falls asleep. But animals, we

know, are not human and are, in many significant ways, not like us. How do we interpret their cries or their wriggling as pain reactions if they are silent?

What we do with animals to be able to say that they are in pain is precisely what we do with the newborn and the infant: we empathize. We suppose for this purpose that animals are, in fact, "like us," and we interpret the context of the cry. We also proceed by trial and error, determining what stimuli need to be removed to end the animal's reaction.¹⁰ We are not concerned with whether the animal's higher consciousness, its memory and its ability to understand cause and to forecast results, are different from our own, even though we know that for us the development of our consciousness, our memory, our understanding, and our sense of anticipation all may affect our experience of pain. With animals, we respond when we hear or see the physical sign we interpret as a symptom of distress.

Once we have made the leap that permits us to identify with animals, we do not need to dwell on the overt signs of physical distress. All we need is knowledge that an injury has been inflicted to understand that the animal will be in pain. Consider, by way of illustration, this passage on the cruelties of whaling: "A lacerated wound is inflicted with an explosive charge, and the whale, a highly sensitive mammal, then tows a 300-ton boat for a long time, a substantial fraction of an hour, by means of a harpoon pulling in the wound."¹¹ The author does not particularize any behavior of the wounded whale beyond its labor tugging the whaleboat, nor does he need to. We perceive the situation and the whale's agony. In a similar way the cruelty involved in hunting seals is shown by pointing to their being shot and left to die on the ice.¹² The pain of the dying seal is left to imaginative empathy.

We are, in our arguments about animal suffering and in our social response to them, willing to generalize from our own experience of pain and our knowledge of what causes pain to us. We know that pain requires a force inflicting bodily injury and that, for the ordinary sentient being who is not drugged or hypnotized, the presence of such a force will occasion pain. When we see such a force wounding any animal we are willing to say that the animal feels pain.

The Nature of Pain

If we pursue the question more deeply, however, we meet a question of a mixed philosophical-psychological character. What is pain? Pain has in the past been identified with "an unpleasant quality in the sense of touch." Pain has also been identified with "unpleasantness," understood as "the awareness of harm."¹³ In the analysis of Thomas Aquinas, *dolor* requires the deprivation of a good together with perception of the deprivation. *Dolor* is categorized as interior *dolor*, which is consequent on something being apprehended by the imagination or by reason, and exterior *dolor*, which is consequent on something being apprehended by the senses and especially by the sense of touch.¹⁴ The Thomistic definition of exterior *dolor*, while general, is not incongruent with a modern understanding of pain, which requires both harmful action on the body and perception of the action. It has been observed that pain also has a motivational component: part of the pain response is avoidance of the cause of the pain.¹⁵ In the words of Ronald Melzack, a modern pioneer in work on pain, "The complex sequences of behavior that characterize pain are determined by sensory, motivational, and cognitive processes that act on motor mechanisms."¹⁶

Pain, then, while it may be given a general definition, turns out upon investigation to consist of a series of specific responses involving different levels and kinds of activity in the human organism. Melzack has put forward a "gating theory" of pain, in which the key to these responses is the interaction between stimuli and inhibitory controls in the spinal column and in the brain which modulate the intensity and reception of the stimuli.¹⁷ Melzack's theory requires the postulation of control centers, and it is not free from controversy.¹⁸ Yet in main outline it persuasively explains a large number of pain phenomena in terms of stimuli and inhibitors.

To take one illustration at the level of common experience, if someone picks up a cup of hot liquid, his or her response may vary depending on whether the cup is paper or porcelain. The paper cup may be dropped to the ground; an equally hot porcelain cup may be jerkily set back on the table. What is often looked at as a simple reflex response to heat is modified by cognition.¹⁹ To take a more

gruesome experience, a number of soldiers severely wounded on the beach at Anzio told physicians in the field hospital that they felt no pain; they were overwhelmingly glad to be alive and off the beach. The same wounds inflicted on civilians would have been experienced as agonizing.²⁰ For a third example, childbirth without anesthesia is experienced as more or less painful depending on the cultural conditioning which surrounds it.²¹

As all of these examples suggest, both the culture and specific experiences play a part in the perception of pain. Memory, anticipation, and understanding of the cause all affect the perception. It is inferable that that brain is able to control and inhibit the pain response. In Melzack's hypothesis, the gating mechanism controlling the sensory inputs which are perceived as painful operates "at successive synapses at any level of the central nervous system in the course of filtering of the sensory input."²² In this fundamental account, "the presence or absence of pain is determined by the balance between the sensory and the central inputs to the gate control system."²³

What is the nature of the sensory inputs? There are a larger number of sensory fibers which are receptors and transmitters, receiving and transmitting information about pressure, temperature, and chemical changes at the skin. These transmissions have both temporal and spatial patterns. It is these patterns which will be perceived as painful at certain levels of intensity and duration when the impulses are uninhibited by any modulation from the spinal column or brain.²⁴

The Experience of the Unborn

For the unborn to experience pain there must be sense receptors capable of receiving information about pressure, temperature, and cutaneous chemical change; the sense receptors must also be capable of transmitting that information to cells able to apprehend it and respond to it.

By what point do such receptors exist? To answer this question, the observation of physical development must be combined with the observation of physical behavior. As early as the 56th day of gestation the child has been observed to move in the womb.²⁵ In Liley's hypothesis, "the development of structure and the develop-

ment of function go hand in hand. Fetal comfort determines fetal position, and fetal movement is necessary for a proper development of fetal bones and joints.”²⁶ If fetal bones and joints are beginning to develop this early, movement is necessary to the structural growth; and if Liley is correct, the occasion of movement is discomfort or pain. Hence, there would be some pain receptors present before the end of the second month. A physiologist places about the same point — day 59 or 60 — the observation of “spinal reflexes” in the child. Tactile stimulation of the mouth produces a reflex action, and sensory receptors are present in the simple nerve endings of the mouth.²⁷ Somewhere between day 60 and day 77 sensitivity to touch develops in the genital and anal areas.²⁸ In the same period, the child begins to swallow. The rate of swallowing will vary with the sweetness of the injection.²⁹ By day 77 both the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet will also respond to touch; by the same day, eyelids have been observed to squint to close out light.³⁰

A standard treatise on human physiological development puts between day 90 and day 120 the beginning of differentiation of “the general sense organs,” described as “free nerve terminations (responding to pain, temperature, and common chemicals), lamelated corpuscles (responding to deep pressure), tactile corpuscles, neuromuscular spindles, and neurotendinous end organs (responding to light and deep pressure).”³¹ But as responses to touch, pressure, and light precede this period, visible differentiation must be preceded by a period in which these “general sense organs” are functioning.

The cerebral cortex is not developed at this early stage; even at twelve to sixteen weeks it is only 30 percent to 40 percent developed.³² It is consequently a fair conclusion that the cognitive input into any pain reaction will be low in these early months. Neither memory nor anticipation of results can be expected to affect what is experienced. The unborn at this stage will be like certain Scotch terriers, raised in isolation for experimental purposes, who had no motivational pain responses when their noses encountered lighted matches; they were unaware of noxious signals in their environment.³³ But if both sensory receptors and spinal column are involved, may one say with assurance that the reception of strong

sense impressions causes no pain? It would seem clear that the reactions of the unborn to stimuli like light and pressure are the motivational responses we associate with pain. We say that a sense receptor is there because there is a response to touch and a taste receptor because there is a response to taste. By the same token we are able to say that pain receptors are present when evasive action follows the intrusion of pressure or light, or when injection of a disagreeable fluid lowers the rate of swallowing. Liley is categorical in affirming that the unborn feel pain.³⁴ His conclusion has recently been confirmed by an American researcher, Mortimer Rosen, who believes the unborn respond to touch, taste, and pain.³⁵

While the likelihood of weak participation by the cerebral cortex will work against the magnification of the pain, there will also be an absence of the inhibitory input from the brain which modulates and balances the sensory input in more developed beings. Consequently, the possibility exists of smaller and weaker sensory inputs having the same effect which later is achieved only by larger and stronger sensations.

As the sensory apparatus continues to grow, so does the cerebral cortex: light stimuli can evoke electrical response in the cerebral cortex between the sixth and seventh months.³⁶ By this time there will be a substantial cerebral participation in pain perception together with the likelihood of greater brain control of the sensory input. If a child is delivered from the womb at this date, he or she may shed tears. He or she will cry.³⁷ As we do with other newborns, we interpret these signs in terms of their context and may find them to be signs of pain. What we conclude about the delivered child can with equal force be concluded about the child still in the womb in months six through nine: that unborn child has developed capacity for pain.

In summary, beginning with the presence of sense receptors and spinal responses, there is as much reason to believe that the unborn are capable of pain as that they are capable of sensation. The ability to feel pain grows together with the development of inhibitors capable of modulating the pain. By the sixth month, the child in the womb has a capacity for feeling and expressing pain comparable to the capacity of the same child delivered from the womb. The

observation sometimes made that we don't remember prenatal pains applies with equal force to the pains of being born or the pain of early infancy. Memory, it must be supposed, suppresses much more than it recalls. If we remember nothing about life before birth or life before three or four, it may even be that some recollections are painful enough to invoke the suppressive function of our memory; life in the womb is not entirely comfortable.

The Experience of Pain in an Abortion

The principal modern means of abortion are these. In early pregnancy sharp curettage is practiced: a knife is used to kill the unborn child.³⁸ Alternatively, suction curettage is employed: a vacuum pump sucks up the unborn child by bits and pieces, and a knife detaches the remaining parts.³⁹ In the second trimester of pregnancy and later a hypertonic saline solution is injected into the amniotic fluid surrounding the fetus. The salt appears to act as a poison;⁴⁰ the skin of the affected child appears, on delivery, to have been soaked in acid.⁴¹ Alternatively, prostaglandins are given to the mother; in sufficient dosage they will constrict the circulation and impair the cardiac functioning of the fetus.⁴² The child may be delivered dead or die after delivery.⁴³

Are these experiences painful? The application of a sharp knife to the skin and the destruction of vital tissue cannot but be a painful experience for any sentient creature. It lasts for about ten minutes.⁴⁴ Being subjected to a vacuum is painful, as is dismemberment by suction. The time from the creation of the vacuum to the chief destruction of the child again is about ten minutes.⁴⁵ Hypertonic saline solution causes what is described as "exquisite and severe pain" if, by accident during an abortion, it enters subcutaneously the body of the woman having the abortion.⁴⁶ It is inferable that the unborn would have an analogous experience lasting some two hours, as the saline solution takes about this long to work before the fetal heart stops.⁴⁷ The impact of prostaglandins constricting the circulation of the blood or impairing the heart must be analogous to that when these phenomena occur in born children: they are not pleasant. If, as has been known to happen, a child survives saline or prostaglandin poisoning and is born alive, the child will be functioning with diminished capacity in such vital

functions as breathing and cardiac action.⁴⁸ Such impaired functioning is ordinarily experienced as painful.

Do the anesthetics the mother has received lessen the pain of the child? It is entirely possible that some drugs will cross the placenta and enter the child's system, causing drowsiness. Anesthesia, however, is not administered to the gravida with the welfare of her child in mind, nor do the anesthetics ordinarily used prevent the mother from serious pain if she is accidentally affected by the saline solution. It may be inferred the child is not protected either. Is it possible that the abortifacient agent destroys the pain receptors and the capability of a pain response earlier than it ends the life of the unborn, so that there is a period of unconsciousness in which pain is not experienced? This is possible in curettage by knife or suction, but it would seem to occur haphazardly, since stunning the child is not the conscious aim of the physician performing the abortion. In saline or prostaglandin poisoning it seems unlikely that the pain apparatus is quickly destroyed. An observation of Melzack is of particular pertinence: the local injection of hypertonic saline opens the spinal gate, he has remarked, and evokes severe pain. At the same time, it raises the level of the inhibitors and closes the gate to subsequent injections.⁴⁹ From this it may be inferred that an unborn child subjected to repeated attempts at abortion by saline solution — the baby in the *Edelin* case was such a child⁵⁰ — suffers a good deal the first time and much less on the second and third efforts. The general observation of Melzack on the mechanism of pain is also worth recalling: any lesion which impairs the tonic inhibitory influence from the brain opens the gate, with a consequent increase in pain.⁵¹ Any method of abortion which results first in damage to the cortex may have the initial effect of increasing the pain sensations.

From the review of the methods used, we may conclude that as soon as a pain mechanism is present in the fetus — possibly as early as day 56 — the methods used will cause pain. The pain is more substantial and lasts longer the later the abortion is. It is most severe and lasts the longest when the method is saline poisoning.

Whatever the method used, the unborn are experiencing the greatest of bodily evils, the ending of their lives.⁵² They are under-

going the death agony. However inarticulate, however slight their cognitive powers, however rudimentary their sensations, they are sentient creatures undergoing the disintegration of their being and the termination of their vital capabilities. That experience is painful in itself. That is why an observer like Magda Denes, looking at the body of an aborted child, can remark that the face of the child has "the agonized tautness of one forced to die too soon."⁵³ The agony is universal.

Conclusion

There are no laws which regulate the suffering of the aborted like those sparing pain to dying animals. There is nothing like the requirement that consciousness must be destroyed by "rapid and effective" methods as it is for cattle; nothing regulating the use of the vacuum pump the way the decompression chamber for dogs is regulated; nothing like the safeguard extended even to newborn kittens that only a humane mode of death may be employed. So absolute has been the liberty given the gravida by the Supreme Court that even the prohibition of the saline method by a state has been held to violate the Constitution.⁵⁴ The Supreme Court has acted as though it believed that its own fiat could alter reality and as if the human fetus is not alive.

Can human beings who understand what may be done for animals and what cannot be done for unborn humans want this inequality of treatment to continue? We are not bound to animals to the same degree as we are bound to human beings because we lack a common destiny, but we are bound to animals as fellow creatures, and as God loves them out of charity, so must we who are called to imitate God.⁵⁵ It is a sign not of error or weakness but of Christlike compassion to love animals. Can those who feel for the harpooned whale not be touched by the situation of the salt-soaked baby? We should not despair of urging further the consciences of those who have curtailed their convenience to spare suffering to other sentient creatures.

With keener sensibilities and more developed inhibitors than animals, we are able to empathize with their pain. By the same token, we are able to empathize with the aborted. We can comprehend what they must undergo. All of our knowledge of pain is by

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empathy: we do not feel another's pain directly. That is why the pain of others is so tolerable for us. But if we begin to empathize, we may begin to feel what is intolerable.

We are bound to the beings in the human womb by the common experience of pain we have also known in the womb. We are bound to them as well by a common destiny, to share eternal life. As fellow wayfarers, we are bound to try to save them from a premature departure. We can begin to save them by communicating our knowledge of the suffering they must experience.

NOTES

1. *Floyd v. Anders*, 440 F. Supp. 535, 539 (D.S.C. 1977).
2. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, 162 (1973).
3. *Id.* at 163.
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44. André Hellegers, director of the Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute, to the author, oral communication.
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51. Melzack, op. cit., p. 171.
52. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 4, 52.
53. Denes, op. cit., p. 60.
54. *Planned Parenthood v. Danforth*, 428 U. S. 52 (1976).
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Health for the New Woman

Susan Austin

WE ARE HALFWAY through the International Decade of Women; how does the battleground look? The ERA remains unratified, and women still earn, on the whole, less money than men. Beautiful unclad bodies still draw customers to the covers of *Penthouse* and *Mademoiselle*, and even, surprisingly, *Ms.* But on one front the battle rages with impressive success: feminist health care is thriving.

Women's health clinics are popping up everywhere, to the apparent chagrin of regular medical practitioners. Midwives deliver babies at home; abortionists do their business in hospitals; feminists hail this as medical advance. Women examine themselves with mirrors and plastic specula, and lecture each other on breast cancer, yeast infections, and menopause. And since, in America, nothing becomes fashionable without releasing a spate of books, feminist health manuals jam the bookstores.

The grandmother of these manuals is called *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (published by Simon and Schuster). Begun by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective in 1969, it was the first of a new breed, mingling feminist politics with ordinary health care — feminist philosophy advanced via ordinary details of nutrition and anatomy. Previous health books might decorate their covers with the staff of Aesculapius; *Our Bodies, Ourselves* chose to illustrate itself with a photograph of a sign at a women's rally: "Women Unite."

The book was an instant hit. Clinics bought it and recommended it to their patients. Acting on the advice of the cover, women shared the book with others. Sales soared and translations appeared. It was put into Braille. In 1976 a new edition was produced. By 1979 it was published in a dozen languages, ranging from Spanish to Swedish to Japanese. It had become the Bible of health books for any woman who was troubled by a lump in the breast, a pregnancy, a venereal disease, an abnormal menstrual period, a miscarriage, an approach of menopause, a less than perfect sex life, or even a simple curiosity

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about the workings of her body. In fact, it was a book with an appeal for nearly every woman in the country.

Competition has not spoiled its status. By now its sales are near two and a half million. More translations are being prepared — including Portuguese, Greek, Hindi, and various other Indian languages. It has become the Standard Reference Work and model for many books that have followed. It is used as a textbook not only by women's groups but also in high schools, medical schools, and hospitals. Another new edition is planned for 1983.

Meanwhile, some members of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective joined with other authors to produce a new book. This one is for teenagers, male as well as female; it is called *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives* (Random House, 1980). Like *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, it has all the flavor of a Standard Reference Work. It addresses teenagers who are curious about their bodies, who are curious about the other sex, who are lonely, who use drugs, who need birth control, who are in trouble with parents or peers, who find themselves unexpectedly pregnant, who feel horny, who wonder what menstruation is or why they are so slow (or fast) to develop breasts. Again, something for everyone.

Like its predecessor, *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives* mixes its good advice with its own brand of philosophy so effectively that it is difficult to separate the one from the other; the two tend to be swallowed together. Notions which were radical in *Our Bodies, Ourselves* have become axiomatic in *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives*. In the former they were stated clearly in order to be defended; in the second they are implied because they no longer need defense. The new book recommends that readers who need further elucidation turn to *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, which I now do in order to uncover the philosophy which *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives* takes for granted.

The main endeavor of this new book is to teach teenagers how to enjoy their "sexuality" without courting disaster. It begins by clearing up the "mystery" of their new bodies, and goes on to lessons in masturbation, intercourse, homosexual practice, and a good deal more. The second part ("avoiding disaster") covers sexually-transmitted diseases, but of course the biggest and most-to-be-avoided disaster is pregnancy. Making babies is not the purpose of sexual

intercourse. The act of love is by no means a sacrament which results in the organic unity of a family. According to *Changing Bodies*, sexual expression is essentially a means of communication. As the old tag puts it: "Sex is just Nature's way of saying Hi."

How did they come on this notion? With the rise of feminism, children are seen as burdens that drag women down. Though no one denies that a woman has a womb to bear children and breasts to nourish them, feminists deny that the shape of a woman's body has anything to do with the shape of her destiny. Motherhood is considered a role to be chosen, not a nature to be consented to. Thus we are *not* our bodies, if or when we don't *want* to be.

But unlike religious women, who for the greater glory of God choose not to be mothers by choosing to deny themselves the act which results in motherhood, feminists who choose not to be mothers do not abandon sex. Sexual pleasure, in fact, is one of the great wonders of the world which feminists have discovered. So "We are our bodies," says the aptly titled *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, when "Sexual feelings and responses are a central expression of our emotional, spiritual, physical selves." Even babies, it says, are sexual creatures: "Sexual feelings involve our whole bodies."¹ This aspect of our biology is in fact our destiny — a central expression of our human nature.

Given this situation — that we are not our bodies with respect to motherhood, and yet we are our bodies with respect to sexual pleasure — it is certainly annoying that the part of our bodies which we *are not* keeps interfering with the part of our bodies which we *are*. Unfortunately our wombs have not been taught that motherhood is merely a role. Even *Changing Bodies* admits that it is not an accident if a sexually active couple conceives a baby — it is an accident if they do not. Given this striking connection between sex and babies, how is it possible to preserve the notion that lovemaking is essentially communication?

The first answer is of course contraception: barriers, foam, pills, wires, and all the other complicated, dangerous, messy, and peculiar business that has to precede the act of intercourse in order to make sure that it does not do what it does naturally.

However, contraception is neither ideal nor even moderately fun. Feminism sees in this another slap in the face for women. (It is as if a

skydiver, noting how big and bulky parachutes are, were to be offended at society for not repealing the law of gravity.) Nevertheless, the failures of contraception do not force them to admit a connection between the body which feels pleasure and the body which nourishes and suffers. There is, as we all know, another way to insure the division between the two bodies, a second answer — the “indispensable tool,”² abortion.

Although abortion has been legal for almost a decade, it still raises enough controversy to cause the authors of both books to defend their position. The worthwhileness of abortion has not yet become axiomatic: even those who claim that sex is communication pause to wonder if abortion does not mean killing babies.

Certainly not, reply these books with one breath. In the first place, a fetus is too immature to live outside his mother’s body, so of course it is not killing to remove him from her body. Is that perfectly clear?

In the second place, fetuses are not babies anyway because they are little — very, very little. About the size of a lima bean, or a walnut. They also look strange because they are so immature. Their strangeness and littleness prove that they are not babies.

In the third place, even if they were babies, that doesn’t mean they have rights. Mothers have rights, of course, because they are grown up, with important rights like privacy and reproductive freedom. Wouldn’t it be an injustice to have a law that favors a little, weak, helpless lima bean or even walnut over an honest-to-goodness grown woman?

And in the last place, even if they were babies and even if it were important to take care of them just *because* they are little and weak, don’t you see that abortion is really a way of taking good care of them? The quality of life we offer our babies is much more important than life itself. Isn’t a life of a few months in a dark sea with a violent and painful death at the end of it obviously much better for a child than the ghastly risk of living to be unwanted?

This last remarkable argument is fortunately not often used for people other than lima-bean sized babies. Not many husbands who perceive that the coming child will be a source of grief to the mother take the opportunity to improve the quality of her own life by thoughtfully putting her away. Not many wives who no longer want

their husbands shoot them instead of taking them to the divorce courts. Suicide among teenagers who feel themselves unwanted is still usually seen as a sorrow rather than a blessing. The treatment apparently only works for those who have no choice in the matter.

This is not to say, however, that unborn children are always to be put in the category of malignant growths. If the baby is wanted, he becomes a very different being. The lima bean which may be vacuumed away becomes, if he is more fortunate in his selection of a mother, someone so precious that he could be harmed by an aspirin. *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the same book that remains unmoved by the "signs of life"³ often displayed by a fetus aborted by prostaglandins, is appalled by fetal monitors because doctors have not considered the obvious question of whether they cause pain to the baby. To feminists a baby may or may not be human, but whichever it is, thinking makes it so.

Whatever I choose to do is right, they argue. So long as you are not pressured into it, says *Changing Bodies*, any kind of sexual behavior is morally good. No one can make you have an abortion, they repeat, but no one should stop you either. The choice is yours, they say (over and over again), the decision is yours. Do as you please. Whatever you choose is right. Kinky sex may not be right for everyone, but if you choose it, it is right for you. Not by chance is the pro-abortion movement called "pro-choice."

Having said that, however, they are still able to say that not every choice is good. Obviously rape is not good, however freely chosen by the rapist. It also turns out that some kinds of choices make you want to stop freedom of choice for others. That is not good. Anti-abortionists, no matter how freely they have chosen their position that the killing should stop, are not letting others choose to let the killing go on. That is not good at all.

Our Bodies, Ourselves, the more vehement of the two books, has a longer list of bad choices. Most doctors are evil for choosing to work for pay. Men who choose to demand babies from their wives are evil, as are men who pay more attention to their careers than to the housework. Still, no matter how oppressive and selfish these ways of behaving are, there doesn't seem to be much doubt that they were freely chosen. How can such bad choices be excluded from the doctrine that whatever is chosen is right?

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An old way of distinguishing between good and bad choices is to judge the will that makes the choice. A good way to understand this is through the poetry of *The Divine Comedy*. The inhabitants of the Inferno are there out of choice, not only past choice but present. Because they have evil wills and despise goodness, their choices are evil and have evil results. Those who undergo Purgatory have imperfect wills — they incline towards good, but until they can choose it, their purification continues. When they choose to enter Paradise, they ascend. Dante himself, passing through the last fire, is told by his guide,

“Take henceforth thy pleasure for thy guide . . . Free, upright, and whole is thy will and it were a fault not to act on its bidding; therefore over thyself I crown and mitre thee.”⁴

Like those in the Inferno, Dante does what he chooses, but unlike them, his will is bent on universal goodness and the unchanging will of God. Of him, therefore, it may be said with precision that whatever he chooses to do is right.

Yet this way of distinguishing between choices is worse than useless for the authors of *Our Bodies* and *Changing Bodies*. They cannot admit that such a thing as unchanging goodness exists. They have never conceived of freedom in terms of an upright will embracing a law. Freedom to them is freedom *from* laws, and goodness is the pleasure of the moment. Their quandary over the anti-abortionists and doctors remains.

To get out of it they turn once again to the rhetoric of definition. The same choice that in their opponents is contemptible is, in themselves, admirable, by definition. Some kinds of behavior set a person free to be herself; others are selfish. Some are economically prudent; others are aimed at making a profit. Some mean paying attention to one's own vital needs; others mean not caring who gets hurt. Once again, whichever it is, thinking makes it so.

It is in this ability to *use* definitions that the power of these books and of the Women's Movement that spawned them lies. Defining sex as communication gives them a reason to demand abortion as an indispensable tool. Shrewd use of language gives them power to condemn their enemies and exalt their friends with neither consistency nor justification. Above all, defining their unborn offspring as

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“growths” in their “own bodies” gives them — like gods — the power of life and death.

It is a bitter paradox that abortion is the great Cause of a movement that began as a reaction to the crimes committed against women by men who used the definition of “inferior beings” to give themselves power over those who were at that time weak, voiceless, and unprotected by law.

NOTES

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
4. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, tr. by John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), “Purgatorio,” Canto XXVII, lines 130-142.

Faith and Expertise

George Gilder

I THINK IT IS important to understand that a lot of the despair about the future that one finds pervasive in today's world is not based on any objective conditions we face. As a matter of fact, it's clear to anybody who has any imagination that the problems we face today are not extraordinary or especially difficult or unparalleled in human experience.

Yet there is this pervasive notion, this sort of megalomania of our current generation, to believe that our current problems are especially difficult; and most of this belief derives from what I've called the "materialist fallacy," the belief that people are somehow the problem, the belief that resources are material and finite in quantity, and that people, as populations expand, somehow constitute a burden on resources.

The fact is that resources have always appeared finite, and throughout human history any group that contemplated existing material resources and attempted to measure them, always predicted their exhaustion, from the time of Malthus up through the endless estimates of the experts about our current predicament; they have always suggested that the human predicament is impossible.

As a matter of fact, by a narrow rational calculus, the human predicament is always impossible. The great problem in contemporary society is that this narrow rational calculus prevails and thus leads to a kind of despair, which in turn leads to programs of planning and control which exclude the surprises of human creativity which have always overcome all our human difficulties. And that is why the predictions of gloom and despair have a perfect counterpoint in the programs for regulation and control. This counterpoint really reflects a failure of faith.

To get an idea of the problems created by such expertise, con-

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sider that, last year at MIT, all the leading geologists assembled to contemplate the prospects for energy resources in the future. These experts all solemnly decided that by 2015 a total of 70 trillion cubic feet of natural gas would be discovered in North America. The result was a book published this year under the title *Energy in Transition*; by the time it came out, there were two finds in Canada believed to represent some 440 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. And then in Louisiana and the Tuscaloosa trench were further immense discoveries of geopressurized methane that are now being delivered for the first time.

The essential point is that experts are always wrong on these major issues about the future of policy. And to the extent that we depend on experts and allow decision-making power to depart from families and individuals and businesses and churches and rise toward governments, what happens is the very horizons of the future are beclouded, and the surprises of human creativity that are indispensable to overcoming our problems are thwarted.

This is, I think, our crucial problem, because it's clear that in any objective terms, the various difficulties we face around the world — from overpopulation to energy to economic stagnation — pale before the overwhelming crises that have persisted throughout human history.

I believe that conservatives themselves have contributed to some extent to this problem in the economic sphere because they've tended to focus on the economic realm as if it were separate from the larger domain of human activity.

I think this did begin with Adam Smith. It wasn't that Adam Smith himself had such a narrow view, but the interpretation of Adam Smith that's been transmitted through the classical economic tradition has focused on self-interest as the governing force in capitalism. I believe that self-interest leads us by an invisible hand to an ever-growing welfare state, as people pursue comfort and security as their chief interests and abandon the long-term goals that always depend on faith in God and faith in the future to fulfill.

This is one of the major flaws of conservative economics which, like Keynesian theory, seeks to establish itself as a science with *homo economicus* at the center, making optimizing decisions. The

fact is that, as John Kenneth Galbraith himself has noticed in recent years in a fascinating confession called *The Nature of Mass Poverty*, what self-interested individuals do in a depressed and stagnant economy is accommodate themselves to their poverty.

This is why Galbraith has essentially given up on overcoming the problems of poverty in the Third World. If they can't be solved through socialism, he doesn't believe that they can be solved in any way because the poor rationally accommodate themselves to their poverty.

Yet if throughout the Third World today the poor are accommodating themselves to their poverty — despite the manifest demonstrations of incredible economic growth produced by capitalist organization and new technologies — how much more rational was it for the poor at the time of the Industrial Revolution, or the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, to accommodate themselves to their poverty?

It's clear today that poverty can easily be overcome, while in the 18th Century, the period when the Industrial Revolution in fact emerged, it was much more rational to succumb meekly to the condition of poverty.

So I think that the crucial dimension of escaping our current predicament is faith in God and faith in the future; and the real problem of the American economy is not, narrowly construed, some objective pressure on natural resources, some new development of rising populations, but a collapse of faith and a relinquishing of decision-making increasingly to experts devoted to a secular rationalist calculus of our affairs.

The problem of expertise was well summed up by Chesterton when he said that the argument for expertise would be unanswerable if it were true that someone who kept looking at something, who looked at something every day and practiced it, went on seeing more and more of it. But the fact is the expert doesn't see more and more of something; he sees less and less of it, or less and less of its real significance. And that is why, as we relinquish ourselves to the ministrations of experts, the crucial sources of faith and progress get eclipsed.

The greatest triumph of expertise probably has been evinced in Sweden, where experts control family policy to a degree that could

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scarcely be imagined in the United States. Every single goal of the Left on family policy in the United States prevails in Sweden. They even have laws against spanking your children. They have paternity leaves for fathers. They have every kind of anti-discrimination program, they have every kind of daycare support, they have every imaginable family planning effort, they have sexual education from early childhood; they have really fulfilled the entire program of the family planners and the Left in America. Before we proceed another step on this course that we too are following, we should come to terms with this Swedish experiment and its results.

Sweden now has a 60% higher divorce rate than the United States. We have a terrible divorce rate; they have a divorce rate 60% higher. Half of all pregnancies to young women in Sweden are ended by abortion, despite the fact that they have a wider distribution of contraceptive information and instruction than in any other country. Despite the fact that half of the pregnancies end in abortion, a third of all children in Sweden are born out of wedlock; a third of all Swedish births are illegitimate. This is in the country that has fulfilled our agenda for family planning and enlightenment. That's about three times the proportion of American rates of illegitimacy, which are themselves very high and depressing.

This is another case where the experts have completely destroyed the institutions and failed in the purposes that they ostensibly sought. This is the dead end of the kind of policies that are being urged upon us so widely in the United States as the answer to our family problem.

Such expertise has produced the same kind of contradictory effect in the area of poverty. During the 60's we undertook a great war on poverty, as we are all aware. And many people today believe that the war on poverty in some way succeeded; that now only 6.4% or 5.6% of all Americans are below the poverty line. Somehow we've abolished poverty by redistributing income.

This belief, I'm distressed to say, is entirely untrue. What in fact has happened since the 1960's is a great increase in the incomes of the poor in America at the cost of the catastrophic breakdown of their families. And since the family is the only institution which is capable of generating upward mobility, the higher incomes have

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come in exchange for the perpetuation and intensification of poverty in America.

The situation is worse today in the ghetto, where all these poverty programs were concentrated, and here again is a case where the liberal experts have to confront the facts. This is their test. They enacted all these programs, they concentrated them specifically on the black poor in the central cities of America; and the result today is that six out of ten black children are brought up without fathers in the home, and in the welfare culture itself, virtually *all* the children are brought up without fathers in the home. This is a desperate tragedy and catastrophe, and it's directly attributable, and can be shown to be attributable, to the very programs that the experts thought could solve the problem of poverty.

The fact is that the kind of expertise to which we increasingly resort in attempting to overcome what are called our social problems almost dependably exacerbate them. I think there is a real reason for this, and it has a direct relation to my previous observations about the role of narrow self-interest as the driving force in the system, and where it leads.

This idea creates a kind of economics without a soul. It creates an economics without the dimensions of faith in the future which are crucial to all economic triumph. This idea that capitalism is a Faustian pact of some sort we make with the devil, in which we achieve economic growth by exploiting greed and avarice, is profoundly misconceived.

The way capitalism works is by inducing people to fulfill the needs of others in imaginative ways. The capitalist succeeds to the extent that other people succeed, and to the extent that he responds imaginatively to the needs of others. In other words, not self-interest, but altruism is the crux of capitalist success.

This does not mean that all capitalists are altruistic or generous, but it does mean that the system can succeed only to the extent that it does respond imaginatively to the needs of others and to the extent that it does grant to those people who have shown an ability to forego immediate gratifications in order to pursue long term goals the resources to continue that process.

It's not that capitalism gives greater incentives or rewards. This is part of it, but the crux of it is not that capitalism gives greater

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rewards to people who take risks and launch new enterprises; it's that capitalism links knowledge with power. It gives greater resources to the very people who have already demonstrated, by foregoing immediate gratifications and pursuing long term goals in the imaginative fulfillment of the needs of others.

Ordinarily, somebody who does succeed in a major business or launches some new product has gained knowledge in the course of it, and this knowledge, then, is connected to that process of reinvestment which is at the crux of the system. The problem of redistribution is that as soon as somebody does succeed in this way, the money is taken away from him. Or else he's forced to forego the knowledge that allowed him to succeed and instead consult with tax consultants, tax lawyers, tax planning advisers, of the sort that now surround my household.

The crux of the capitalist success is not that it allows leading capitalists to revel in wealth — if they hoard their wealth, the system tends to fail — it's that capitalism is based on giving. The capitalist keeps giving back to the system, and that's what makes it grow.

The key misconception of the left is that giving is somehow easy — you just go to the street corner and distribute dollars, or you create a welfare system that redistributes money — that giving is somehow simple. But anybody who really considers the problem closely realizes that it's difficult to give, that it takes intimate knowledge to give.

That's why families are the crucial instrument of overcoming poverty, because people who live with other people and have direct responsibilities for them, who bear children and thus have their lives extended into the future through their children, give in a productive and successful way; while distant institutions distributing dollars cannot give.

But I think capitalists, capitalist institutions, also succeed to the extent that they can successfully reinvest, successfully pursue this process of giving. The typical entrepreneur creates goods and jobs, invests time and money, arranges transportation and marketing, all long before any return is received or assured. It is a commitment that, however mercenary in process, depends ultimately — across an entire society — on a culture of generosity and faith. Capitalism

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is the system that makes it possible to give productively, to give in a way that really does help other people, that creates jobs and markets and opportunities for others.

This is the essence of capitalist success, and it derives from the crucial institutions of family and faith, and it is founded on the proposition that you give and you'll be given unto.

What Kind of Liberty?

Ellen Wilson

IN AN ESSAY EXPLORING the appeal of Communism in our century, Whittaker Chambers once wrote: “But if we ask: ‘What is the philosophy of the West?’ is there not a certain embarrassment? What *is* the philosophy of the West?”

The dilemma is not merely epistemological, but psychological as well: to acknowledge the existence of a Philosophy of the West is itself an act of faith, and seemingly an old-fashioned one, a survival from the age of imperialism and the shouldering of the White Man’s Burden. In an age when much of the West learns its history chiefly as a record of past sins against other cultures, our moral inheritance may have been reduced to a confessional style.

But if the average liberal intellectual were asked to forego for the moment ritual self-denunciation, and to isolate some great idea — the animating spirit, as it were — of Western civilization, he would probably name respect for the rights of the individual. He would point out that, unlike the faceless and largely changeless ancient civilizations of the East, or the monolithic, totalitarian character of Communist societies, the great milestones of Western history have been the expansion of human freedom, and the extension of individual rights to previously-subservient classes of people.

Now, this respect for the individual is a likely candidate for the position of the informing ideal of the West, but it is an ideal that remains a bit fuzzy around the edges. What, for instance, are its sources, its ends, the conditions of its exercise? What, in other words, does the modern intellectual mean by “freedom for the individual,” and what is the nature of the society he celebrates by his choice?

The modern liberal inaugurates the history of human freedom where everyone else does, in ancient Greece. There, in the great departure from Persian or Egyptian models, the ancient Greeks virtually premiered the West’s discovery of the individual. (The

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Greeks themselves took the same view, as we can see from their own accounts of how the Greek independent spirit was responsible for the defeat of the Persians.) Of course, there was room for improvement on the model, particularly in the attitude toward slavery. The history textbooks — those lightning rods of accepted wisdom on all topics — imply that the state of ancient and medieval technologies was chiefly responsible for the centuries-long delay before all classes of human beings qualified as individuals with inalienable rights. But by and by, after the invention of the steam engine and some unfortunate experiments with sweatshops, slavery was abolished, the franchise extended, and “Fanfare for the Common Man” adopted as the West’s theme song.

These are the contours of the modern liberal’s history of human freedom, and it is our task not to argue the details, but to define terms and see how the thing works. There are few better places to do so than in the pages of John Stuart Mill, who was prophet and evangelist of our modern conception of human freedom.

Mill’s extended essay *On Liberty* is one of the most forthright and impassioned defenses of human liberty ever written. Though it was his intention to root individual liberties in utilitarian logic, his language at times approaches mystic ecstasy. If Francis of Assisi was the bridegroom of Poverty, then John Stuart Mill is Liberty’s knight errant. No wonder teenage individualists, introduced to him in political science courses, are enthralled. But it is not only the stirring chapter on liberty of thought and discussion which enthalls them: the following section, “Of Individuality As One of the Elements of Well-Being,” is even headier stuff.

Few would deny the importance of individuality and an independent mind to the preservation of human freedom. But Mill’s “individuality” is something more — or less. It is more nearly related to the sixties “life-styles,” and in fact it presents a very sixties argument: that all custom and traditional ways of doing things; all establishments, religious and secular; all accommodations to other people’s taste and preferences, should as far as possible be avoided, because they impede the free expression of the individual personality:

Independence of action and disregard of custom are not solely deserving of encouragement for the chance they afford that better modes of action, and

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customs more worthy of adoption, may be struck out . . . If a person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode.

Now, such a doctrine, leavened with good sense and a little humility, might do little harm. But the leaven is an added ingredient, outside the Individualist Philosophy; to vary the metaphor, it is an underlay, a foundation of the Individual Life. Mill himself recognizes that only advanced and politically sophisticated societies can live under democracy, and only some form of democracy can provide the conditions for widespread individuality.

Confusion arises when we try to understand how Mill's society of individualists would differ from our own. Would it be a difference of kind or of degree? The ideal Mill world, judging from *On Liberty*, would be an amalgam of Victorian manners and creative energies on an Elizabethan scale. It would be peopled by beautifully-mannered gentlemen occupying all levels of society, but gentlemen differing in one particular from the usual sort: they would dress originally, conduct their daily lives and social relations as best suited them, schedule meals, work arrangements, entertainment, to suit their convenience. Or as Mill puts it:

It's not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation.

It is a curiously aesthetic view of life as Art Object, although Mill defends his ideal from charges of selfishness or lack of conviction:

It would be a great misunderstanding of this doctrine to suppose that it is one of selfish indifference which pretends that human beings have no business with each other's conduct in life, and that they should not concern themselves about the well-doing or well-being of another.

But what is it that will prevent his "doctrine" from descending into this indifference? What will induce these individuals, intent on fashioning their lives into "noble and beautiful" objects, to care for one another's well-being? What is the moral bedrock on which a society of individualists would rest? Mill meant it to rest on reason, on a proper understanding of the species' self-interest: "I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions, but it must be

utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being.”

But though this may be the motive power behind the enlightened behavior of philosophers of utilitarian persuasion, it is not in itself an argument to sway multitudes — even educated multitudes. Human beings, by and large, proceed from motives of self-interest or from a sense of duty activated by what the 18th century moral philosophers called “moral sentiments.” They are motivated, in other words, by *wants*, or *oughts*. Mill’s utilitarianism, like all such, is an uneasy combination of the two: man *ought* to act in thus and such a way, because it is in his interest to do so. But in whose interest? Actions taken for the improvement of the species are self-interested only in a metaphorical sense, or else they are taken for private reasons, whatever the public benefit. The idea that “posthumous altruism” can be a method of merging the individual with his species in a genuine, non-metaphorical sense is — nonsense. It is, in fact, proved false by its fruits, for it is incapable of rousing us to well-meaning action.

But as I mentioned above, utilitarianism also implies an *ought*, a connection between one’s own actions and the well-being of others. This, of course, is a moral proposition. Hobbes argued that we should obey civil authority because disobedience on a grand scale would reopen the war of man against every other man. (This is not to say that he recognized no higher morality, but he thought this one the most logical, least emotion-tinged explanation for civil obedience, and hence the one that would convince any mind open to rational thought.) But Hobbes’ argument by itself would persuade only the timid or those already committed to a higher, more demanding moral code. The criminal differs from the rest of us not in repudiating Hobbes’ basic utilitarianism, but in disowning that higher code on which civil disobedience ultimately rests. For the criminal, like the rest of us, realizes that most people violate society’s social contract only in trivial, parking-ticket ways. Hobbes’ argument notwithstanding, crime *does* pay, as long as most people remain honest. The Social Contract depends upon something higher — and nobler — than the Social Contract.

Like Hobbes, Mill too easily ignores the need for an ethic congenial to his system. Perhaps this is because he had always been

surrounded by one: it was the moral atmosphere he breathed. What seemed to him human morality at a certain stage in its evolutionary development (a stage leaving much room for improvement, for Mill thought his contemporaries still a pretty superstitious, intolerant lot) was in reality human nature struggling, as it always must, with the demands of a religiously-derived moral code. The virtues enjoined by that code — generosity, humility, and self-denial, among others — in some ways support but in other ways undercut Mill's individualism. They support its care for human rights; they war against its Emersonian self-reliance and secular utopianism. All of us, including Mill, would have been better off if he had asked himself at the start whether his ideal society could be established or even seriously attempted without undermining its religious foundation.

Mill was able to overlook this crucial point because, like many broad-minded educated Victorians, he simply assumed that all cultures (except "dead" ones like the Chinese) have fluid, or "evolving" ethics. He himself favored and confidently anticipated an ethical syncretism that would unite the best features of all moral systems: "I believe that other ethics than any which can be evolved from exclusively Christian sources must exist side by side with Christian ethics to produce the moral regeneration of mankind." Of course, the heyday of individualism would have to await this moral evolution, or rather, the two would develop simultaneously and assist one another. A future society — more broadminded, more liberal — would prove most hospitable to his disciples. And this forthcoming tolerant society would blossom with bold displays of genius, original personalities, and unheard-of creative achievements.

Let us be frank: we cannot recognize ourselves in this picture. We cannot even claim to be such a society in embryo. Instead, we are the ingredients of Mill's utopia, but minus the spectacular results. We have multiplying civil liberties; unprecedented diversity in dress and manners; outlandish forms of speech and behavior. We take innumerable liberties, poetic and otherwise, in artistic works and public entertainment. More, we have extended these opportunities for self-expression up and down the social scale and (another of Mill's causes) to women as well. But the results, with

exceptions that do no more than prove the rule, are cultivated mediocrity; the abandonment not only of certitudes but of belief in their existence; and the unspoken understanding that controversial opinions will not be argued in public. It becomes more and more clear that only an inherited ethic of civility combined with modernity's delicate experiments with democracy permitted Mill to believe much greater things were possible. His faith grows less credible as that ethic continues to deteriorate.

It would be silly to blame Mill for this deterioration. Still, there are reasons why he and the Judeo-Christian ethic cohabit very uncomfortably. The passion for openmindedness and the thorough thrashing-out of ideas and the refusal to call any question closed while even one dissenter coyly abstains from consensus; the guarantee of a fair shake to all ideas, meaning no internal prejudices or preferences for one idea over another, cannot but foster relativism on the one hand, and a violent impulse to break the tedious argument on the other. The history of this century offers examples of both kinds of reaction, and who is to say which will prove the more dangerous?

The reasons for relativism are not complex or hard to find. If you are honor-bound to grant representatives of all views equal status, not just in form but in truth; if you outlaw invidious discriminations between opinions, then you will gradually lose the ability to make any kind of discrimination, invidious or benign, rational or prejudicial. Further, you will lose the moral power to assert truth: to assert those truths you hold *as truths*, and not merely as theories or opinions or contenders among ideas. It is a matter of psychological posture. The Mill philosophy requires that you hold yourself intellectually off-guard, for you are supposed to be listening to all opinions, rather than defending one. But to be this openminded you must lower your defenses, and confronting an argument in a defenseless posture decreases your chances of winning it. The conviction of truth coincides with the conviction of your opponent's error.

But Mill's individualism produces another ill effect, and that is the atomization of society into small groups and isolated individuals who seldom intersect and may never even become aware of one another. In modern times artists and poets often complain of their

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isolation from the common man, and their inability to move, instruct, or influence him. But since the 1960's a similar isolation has been the lot of most segments of the general population as well. After all, if people pursue self-development "individually," without canvassing opinions as to what sort of development is good or useful or even possible; if outside influences are suspect because they incline us toward conformism and an unwholesome orthodoxy, then those influences will be slight and our native tendencies will largely run unchecked, rendering us less fit to enjoy the company of anyone not very much like us. (Of course excesses equally undesirable exist on the side of conformity and dependency, but the most dangerous extreme is always the popular one.) The upshot of rampant individualism is an excessive distaste for the company of those who differ from us. As we grow less comfortable defending our own opinions as the product of rational thought, we grow more and more irritated by other, conflicting opinions, especially if they are held more tenaciously and defended more vigorously than our own. "Opinions" are redefined as the (largely irrational) effluences of individual psychologies — psychologies largely determined by environment and upbringing. It would be silly to argue them in earnest; equally silly to enshrine some publicly, at the expense of others.

These are not theoretical or academic problems, but problems we already face. Whenever someone publicly argues a moral conviction on moral grounds, and admits that he truly believes he is right, others wrong, he is sure to be told that we cannot allow private morality to influence public decisions. Although everyone holds "personal" opinions on abortion, pornography, etc., many people are now convinced that it would be ill-bred or inconsiderate to "impose" them on others, even via the ballot box. The very belief in individual liberties which makes public diversity of opinion possible is just another "personal opinion" — and so it must remain, until we are once again allowed to introduce first principles into public discussion. Mill at least believed in the evolutionary destiny of the human mind and character, counselling that human societies must grow in complexity, like Darwin's ape, or die. Today our society subsists on the unexamined leavings of this 19th century Darwinian faith, though we are too grown up to

believe it anymore, and too philosophically bankrupt to replace it with another faith.

Though Mill consciously deviated from the moral tradition into which he was born, the humane working-out of his individualist philosophy actually depended on that vestigial habit of civility still lingering in the England of his time. It is there, in the origins of that "vestigial habit," that we must seek that respect for the individual which, we are generally agreed, is our cultural inheritance.

The trouble with Mill's individuality is that it permits and even encourages the practitioner to, as the saying goes, "believe in himself." Mill advises people to casually dismiss custom or traditional beliefs or behavior if, after self-consultation, they find alternative modes of behavior more congenial. It is difficult to spare much thought for others when so much energy is being channelled into one's own development and when, in any event, each person is the final judge of his own progress.

But surely when our imaginary 20th century intellectual identified respect for the individual as our cultural birthright, he had in mind something more exalted than a collection of isolated egos pursuing separate destinies. Surely he envisioned communities of people caring, however imperfectly, for one another's welfare; anxious to safeguard the rights and, insofar as it lies in their power, promote the well-being of those around them; recognizing those original outbursts and even occasional flashes of genius that separate men, but also acknowledging those common heirlooms of Eden, that collection of faults and aspirations, needs and desires, that make us recognizable to one another. We must look, in other words, for a tradition of respect for the individual which originates in a recognition of our common membership in a family of man.

Here, if anywhere, is a Western ethical tradition — interrupted often by outbursts of hatred and bigotry, slow to realize its full implications, but never yet abandoned in principle. It arises from and is nourished by that element in the Judeo-Christian tradition which stresses not man's uniqueness or his originality or distinctive worth, but his common needs, his democratic failings, and the overarching love that addresses itself to both. It is a tradition which stresses not man's worthiness (Old Testament Jews, though God's chosen people, were "stiff-necked") but the love which,

unearned, he receives anyway. Or, as the New Testament formulation puts it: "In this is the love, not that we have loved God, but that he has first loved us."

By concentrating on one important aspect of respect for the individual, and exaggerating it to the neglect of the rest, Mill patented his own Western heresy. For what his individualist faith ignores is that bracing humility, that edge of self-doubt reminding us how easily we, too, may go astray, that preserves the individual from self-absorption — and Self-Reliance. If we are unworthy objects of love, but nevertheless receive love, then it is morally more difficult for us to deny our love to others. At the very least, we are duty-bound to pay scrupulous attention to their rights and requirements. If we are beings capable of knowing what good is but liable, at any time, to fatally mistake or even reject it, then we dare not carelessly depart from the customary or the traditional with no surer guide than private whim or personal convenience. If instinct and emotion are not infallible guides, then we must be somewhat leery of "personal opinions," especially when they coincide with "personal preferences." This is not to say that society will always be right, and the rebelling individual wrong, but that the balance of proof will rest with the rebelling individual. Instead of assuming that each generation, and every individual within a generation may, Raskolnikov-like, overthrow the old established order to satisfy the special requirements of an original character, we will trace a more complicated and less straightforward pattern of progress and regress in moral and intellectual development.

And because the individual, left to his own devices, often proves untrustworthy, because he is heir to a dual inheritance of good and evil, we will not automatically accept extreme originality as a good. Man at his most original goes wrong, for God does not sin. But there is a further reason for demoting originality from its current exalted status, and that is to prevent our being tempted to value human beings accordingly. What then would become of those incapable of original thought, disinclined to self-assertiveness? Those who advocate "Quality of Life" yardsticks for determining who best deserves to be born, or who can best be displaced from a hospital bed are working within the same or sim-

ilar categories: they talk of meaningful relationships and the capacity for spontaneous thought.

The difference between the traditional Judeo-Christian attitude toward the common people and that of Mill-individualists is illuminated by the way each uses the image of sheep. The Mill individualist, seeing the mass of men huddled together, sheeplike, and only inadvertently straying into an uncommon thought or opinion, regards them as failed individualists, inferior souls. Certainly they have often retarded the progress of bold and original minds. But the Judeo-Christian tradition includes everyone — both the wise and the foolish — in the sheep metaphor, understanding that all stray at times, and all, from the vantage point of omnipotence, think foolish thoughts.

When Whittaker Chambers challenged the West to rediscover its philosophy, he was asking us to rediscover some positive ideal that could be opposed to the great totalitarian philosophies of our time. One of the tragic missteps of this century was the substitution of the philosophy of “doing as you please” for that of “doing unto others.” The first is scarcely worth living for, and certainly not worth dying for. It cannot hearten, or uplift, or sustain, or even instruct.

The Scottish moral philosophers of the 18th century identified the motivating force for human sympathy as the desire on the part of both sufferer and onlooker for union: Sympathy was the imaginative sharing of another’s joy or sorrow as a route to unanimity of feeling, and a temporary, partial escape from the loneliness of individuality. Similarly, the ethic of doing unto others is rooted in the knowledge of man’s great need and his tremendous helplessness — but also in his faith in fellowship, unaleness. And ultimately, faith in such fellowship depends on a repudiation of purely “personal” opinions.

Happy at Home

Joseph Sobran

"To be happy at home is the end of all human endeavor."

— SAMUEL JOHNSON

FRIENDS OF C. S. LEWIS who raised the subject of politics usually found that he wanted to change the subject. A former student of his who found him extraordinarily generous in all things could not induce him to contribute to a political cause. He didn't like politics.

So we must be careful about ascribing political views to him. He spoke so limpidly for himself that it would be presumptuous to put words in his mouth on any subject. We may be sure that he could have written a political manifesto if he had wanted to. He didn't want to. Let us not try to do it for him.

Still, it is fair to say that he was politically conservative. Since I call myself a conservative, the temptation I feel is to "claim" him for my party. But this would be unjust. He had no party. He declined Sir Winston Churchill's offer of a C.B.E. because he feared that to accept it would be to give color to the suspicion "that my religious writings are all covert anti-Leftist propaganda."

But even the nature of this suspicion tells us something. It was the Left that saw in him a natural enemy, because it is the Left that places its faith and hope in politics. Of course there is also a Right that does the same. But Lewis's conservatism was not of the Right that mirrors the Left. There is a world of difference between the man who wants to be left alone in his cottage and the man who wants to hold a mass-rally in the city. Lewis was a cottage-dweller.

The real source of Lewis's kind of conservatism lay not in any partisanship, but in his sense of what George Will has called "the primacy of private life." It is in private life that a man knows his family, his friends, his neighbors, and above all his God. If we call him conservative, we should bear in mind that he seldom if ever

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refers, even in his private correspondence, to Churchill, the greatest conservative politician of his age.

Lewis had certain pronounced views; if he hadn't, there would be no point in attempting even a modest extrapolation such as I hope mine is. He thought, for example, that "modern industry is a radically hopeless system"; but he admitted he saw no way out of it — he made gentle fun of some friends who formed an agrarian commune — and he hoped wise politicians could find meliorative (as distinct from utopian) correctives. But he saw politics as a technical activity, best left to those trained in it.

He believed in a Christian politics, but not in a politicized Christianity. He thought it was "silly" to expect the clergy to offer a political program. "The job is really on us, the laymen," he wrote in *Christian Behavior* (later included in *Mere Christianity*). "The application of Christian principles, say, to trade unionism or education, must come from Christian trade unionists and Christian schoolmasters: just as Christian literature comes from Christian novelists and dramatists — not from the bench of bishops getting together and trying to write plays and novels in their spare time."

He never supposed that Christian doctrine included practical wisdom in any specialty. He did think that "nothing but the courage and unselfishness of individuals is ever going to make any system work properly," but he didn't think it was the business of the state to enforce the moral virtues its own health depended on. In that sense public life was at the mercy of private life. There was no way around it.

And though he recognized that it was tempting to defer ultimate questions about man and morality "and just carry on with those parts of morality that all sensible people agree about," he thought this was impossible: for "different beliefs about the universe lead to different behavior." The doctrine of the immortality of the soul had a very practical and urgent bearing on "the difference between totalitarianism and democracy. If individuals live only seventy years, then a state, or a nation, or a civilization, which may last for a thousand years, is more important than an individual. But if Christianity is true, then the individual is not only made important but incomparably more important, for he is everlasting and the life of a state or a civilization, compared with his, is only a moment."

Furthermore, no man could judge another as God would judge him. An ordinary man, for instance, might be more virtuous than Hitler only because he lacked Hitler's power and opportunity; a criminal whose wickedness resulted from a bad upbringing might look very different to God than to the magistrate. Not that Lewis would encourage the magistrate to act sentimentally on that account: his duty is to perform human, not divine, justice. The key point is that the state is merely a human institution, subject to all creaturely limitations as well as to limitations of its own.

Lewis's interest in politics is focussed on the premises of politics. The true premises must be Christian. Though he believed in tolerance, Lewis was not exactly what is now meant by the term "pluralist." A sound political order must be based on a very definite view of human destiny: the Christian view. And since Christianity was being discarded, the proper basis of politics was being undermined.

It would be bad enough if the modern world relapsed into pre-Christian paganism, with all its cruelty and slavery and infanticide. But things were worse than that. "A post-Christian man is not a Pagan; you might as well think a married woman recovers her virginity by divorce." Post-Christian man was adopting a whole new cosmology, in which the moral order taken for granted even by most pagans was being "debunked" by purportedly "scientific" attitudes. New technologies were being put at the service of new ideologies, which authorized new ruling elites, in the name of science, to create "new men" and build "new societies."

Modern ideologies have disastrous political results, but they are not merely political. If genocide issues from the denial of the moral bond between ruler and subject, feticide denies even the bond between mother and child. And yet both pretend to be benevolent. "Of all the tyrannies," Lewis wrote, "a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It may be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies" — especially those humanitarian busybodies who decide that their victims would really be better off dead.

For many people today, the very nature of "politics" consists in choosing what sort of ideological scheme to impose on society, with "society" conceived as the aggregate of so many interchange-

able human units. This view assumes as a matter of course that the units don't have souls, or even subtle qualities that elude the grasp of social planners. Spiritual and aesthetic and moral experiences count for nothing: they are merely "subjective." To Lewis, on the other hand, it is in just these experiences that human beings discover their real selves with most intensity. They are necessarily private experiences. That is why the state must respect them, and leave them alone, as beyond its competence.

When we consider Lewis's political views it is not enough to discard the prevalent ideologies. We also have to abandon the usual idiom in which politics is commonly discussed. Fortunately, he makes it easy for us: he speaks in a simple and classical English that Dr. Johnson would have found as understandable as we do. Lewis had a wonderful sense of what is permanent, in language as in morality. His style is distinguished not only by its clarity — a virtue most of us can, with effort, achieve — but by that gift for the radiant analogy, the inspired metaphor, which Aristotle identifies as the mark of genius. For that reason it seems likely that he will remain readable and, in the best sense, popular long after the immediate controversies of our time have blown over.

Clive Staples Lewis, who lived from 1898 to 1963, was surely the most popular Christian apologist of his generation. Having begun with so banal a statement of fact, I will add at once a controversial view of my own: that he was one of the greatest English writers of the century.

Not that I think my endorsement carries much weight, But I would suggest that Lewis is one of those rare writers, like Shakespeare, Bunyan, Boswell, and Dickens, whose very popularity is a measure of stature. I am really assaying the endorsement of millions of readers. Lewis is widely, deeply, and intelligently *loved*.

This love is not reflected in the esteem of what might be called the literate establishment. Lewis is seldom read in university classrooms, except for his own literary criticism. But this fact means little. In our day literary reputations are largely controlled by a large set of professionalized and publicly subsidized literati with pronounced social, esthetic, and political commitments. I intend no sweeping dismissal of all these men (and women, as their orthodoxy would have me add) when I say that their consensus,

their common denominator so to speak, is less a compelling doctrine than a historical and sociological datum. They by and large believe in progressive politics. They by and large have no interest in Christianity. Lewis is not their man.

Besides, Lewis — unlike Joyce, Eliot, Pound, and Lawrence — offers nothing in the way of technical or intellectual innovation. He doesn't treat the modern age as a charismatic epoch. His plainness of style, his utter clarity, provides no new employment for the academic exegete.

He is clear because his prose is wholly at the service of what he wants to say. Perhaps no other modern man of letters, not even Waugh or Orwell, is so completely extraverted, so free of the impulse to make himself the object of the reader's attention. He seems less the artist than the artisan. Even his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, focusses rather strictly on his conversion to Christianity. Though he announces this in his preface, many readers, including the novelist John Wain, have complained that the book isn't truly confessional. (Lewis himself feared his readers would find it "suffocatingly subjective.")

So it is hard to talk about Lewis apart from his conclusions. This means that the critic can hardly avoid exposing his own position, which condition the academic mind shies away from. In his highly polished way, Lewis demands the reader's commitment. So did G. K. Chesterton, another great and lastingly popular writer. Neither Chesterton nor Lewis will quite sit still for academic analysis. On the surface both are far more civil and indeed charitable than the sort of writer — by now conventional — who shakes his (or her) fist at convention; but at bottom they are infinitely more challenging. You must love them or hate them. And what makes them so difficult is the enormous temptation to love them.

You love (or hate) them for what they represent. They spoke boldly for the Christian tradition from which the official West, including the supposedly alienated clerisy, is in corporate flight. Against an age that celebrated apostasy, innovation, "originality" — words like "heretical" and "irreverent" have become terms of dust-jacket flackery — Lewis and Chesterton sang a great and simple theme: the truth of Christ. They made no bones about it: if Christ is not risen, their preaching, even their jocosity, is in vain.

What can the Prudent Critic, uttering respectability to the General Reader, make of such a premise?

And yet if the West recovers, if it goes back on its defection from Christ, C. S. Lewis will surely be accorded the honor he deserves. His talents and merits are many, his achievement complex. And he was, for what it is worth, "original." But his writing draws its power from that simple core of truth: Christ is risen. He was humble enough to stake everything, all his personal deserts, on a reality beyond himself. His career was, in the full sense, a sacrifice.

In affirming Christ, Lewis violates the last — and latest — taboo. He scandalizes people who are anxious not to appear scandalized by pornography and Communism. He courts rejection by people who defer timidly to the iconoclasm of the existentialist philosopher and the abstract expressionist painter without waiting to find out (or daring to ask) what their obscure productions may mean.

If Lewis is lucid, it is largely because he comes from a lucid tradition, the tradition of England. Anyone who has studied two recent schools of philosophy, the English and the continental, will appreciate the difference. It is a matter of manners; and finally of morals. The most anarchic of Englishmen — Bertrand Russell, say — respects the code of intelligibility. He may question the rights of man, but he will seldom transgress the rights of the reader. He will make his meaning clear. The theory of anarchy, at least, will be orderly.

In a Russell this may be a mere vestige of civility. In Lewis it points to the thing civility merely expresses, the bond between man and man, the moral order that requires us to speak honestly to one another. His style is the esthetic expression of justice and charity. It is inseparable from truth itself. The style is the man. But it is also more. The style is the Faith. If Lewis's prose seems to envelop the reader, that may be because it is an oracle of something larger that embraces writer and reader alike. It is the voice of English Christendom.

There is no trick to it. That voice still calls, quietly, compellingly, to millions. It is a still, small voice; a kindly voice, even

when it speaks of damnation. It whispers with the resonance of eternity.

Lewis's literary voice is beyond mere literary technique. He gives us an oblique and unconscious clue in his essay "Lilies that Fester," where he observes that "it is taken as basic by all the *culture* of our age that whenever artists and audience lose touch, the fault must be wholly on the side of the audience. (I have never come across the great work in which this important doctrine is proved.)"

Here, with casual irony, Lewis calls in question the modern apotheosis of "culture" in its debased sense. As so often, his simplicity is pregnant with deeper meaning. The essay as a whole protests the use of "culture" as a system of initiating and endowing with credentials a new ruling class, out of touch with ordinary human sentiment and not responsible to the moral order in which that sentiment is grounded.

By implication this is a local instance of the problem Lewis addresses in one of his most fundamental books, *The Abolition of Man*. There Lewis discusses the Tao, the entire moral order, in its relation to education. Unless we acknowledge "a common human law of action which can overarch rulers and ruled alike," he warns, education will degenerate into mere conditioning. He thinks the process is already under way, and he explains the distinction between the old and new kinds of education with a vivid simile:

Where the old initiated, the new merely "conditions." The old dealt with its pupils as grown birds deal with young birds when they teach them to fly: the new deals with them more as the poultry-keeper deals with young birds — making them thus or thus for purposes of which the birds know nothing. In a word, the old was a kind of propagation — men transmitting manhood to men: the new is merely propaganda.

Here, in miniature, is Lewis's apprehension of the social and political order of the post-Christian era. The bond between rulers and subjects would be severed. Education, in the hands of amoral rulers, would turn into one of many devices for herding men like animals.

The insight is comprehensive. It doesn't apply only to forms of government we call totalitarian. It applies even to the family, and even within free societies. When abortion, for example, is removed from the framework of the Tao, ceasing to be a violation of the

intimate union of mother and child, not only will frightened girls repair to the clinic to avoid the obloquy of bearing fatherless children: married couples will (as they already do in some cases) abort their unborn children upon finding that they are going to have a girl instead of the boy they had hoped for. “Freedom of choice” — absent the sense of right and wrong — will make having children like buying pets, or disposing of distempered puppies.

Civilization depends heavily on the ability to speak basic truths in plain language. Those who think “style” is no more than arbitrary decoration may not see this, but Lewis does:

The process which, if not checked, will abolish Man, goes on apace among Communists and Democrats no less than among Fascists. The methods may (at first) differ in brutality. But many a mild-eyed scientist in pincenez, many a popular dramatist, many an amateur philosopher in our midst, means in the long run just the same as the Nazi rulers of Germany. Traditional values are to be “debunked” and mankind to be cut out into some fresh shape at the will (which must, by hypothesis, be an arbitrary will) of some few lucky people in one lucky generation which has learned how to do it. The belief that we can invent “ideologies” at pleasure, and the consequent treatment of mankind as mere, specimens, preparations, begins to affect our very language. Once we killed bad men: now we liquidate unsocial elements. Virtue has become *integration* and diligence *dynamism*, and boys likely to be worthy of a commission are “potential officer material.” Most wonderful of all, the virtues of thrift and temperance, and even of ordinary intelligence, are *sales-resistance*.

More wonderful yet, within a decade after Lewis died, killing an unborn child had become *terminating a pregnancy*.

Lewis deplored Hitler and Stalin as much as the next man (and more impartially than many), but he wasted little time in denouncing them. To his mind it was dangerous to ascribe the world’s evil to a few monsters. As early as 1931 he wrote to his friend Arthur Greeves:

Haven’t you noticed how people with a fixed hatred, say, of Germans or Bolsheviks, *resent* anything wh[ich] is pleaded in extenuation, however small, of their supposed crimes. The enemy must be unredeemed black. While all the time one *does* nothing and enjoys the feeling of perfect superiority over the faults one is never tempted to commit.

Spiritually the purveyors of massive evils weren’t so different from common sinners as we might like to think. As he put it in a wartime broadcast talk: “One man may be so placed that his anger

sheds the blood of thousands, and another so placed that however angry he gets he will only be laughed at. But the little mark on the soul may be much the same in both." When millions of unborn children have been destroyed with the connivance of their own parents, we are in no position to assume that "the abolition of man" is something that occurs only "over there."

When I began to admire Lewis intensely, during my college days, I searched his writings for more wisdom, perhaps, than he was confident enough to offer. In particular I tried to wring political opinions out of not only the works he chose to publish while he was alive but even the casual remarks of his letters and conversations, as his brother and friends made these public after his death.

After a while it dawned on me that he wouldn't necessarily thank me — or his brother and friends — for this. Though I still welcome even the most trifling details about his views on any subject, I know how mortified I would feel if my own private grumblings were to be transcribed and printed; and it is only fair to distinguish between his considered opinions, as delivered to the world in his books proper, and what might be called his household words, as posthumously "leaked" by acquaintances. We are free to look on them all as legitimate data, but we must accord each of them a proper weight. And at least he has the advantage over his beloved Dr. Johnson, who is known more widely for what Boswell says he said than for his own writings. (Though this example proves that the self a man chooses to display is not always superior to what others reveal of him.)

On politics and current events Lewis never bothered to keep well informed. He hated the radio and rarely read the papers. Toward journalism in general his attitude was derisive. In a letter he refers slightly to "talk in the papers" and he elsewhere laments that the world as transcribed by the press is a shaky version of events as filtered through press releases, generals, and reporters. His friends recall that he liked to give them the pleasure of informing him of the news; apparently he thought the truth lost less in the step from the papers to his ears than it had already lost on the way to the printing press.

About the past he was no less skeptical. On the contrary. In his essay "Historicism" he is almost nihilistic:

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A single second of lived time contains more than can be recorded. And every second of past time has been like that for every man that ever lived. The past . . . in its reality was a roaring cataract of billions upon billions of such moments: any one of them too complex to grasp in its entirety, and the aggregate beyond all imagination. By far the greater part of this teeming reality escaped human consciousness almost as soon as it occurred. None of us could at this moment give anything like a full account of his own life for the last twenty-four hours. We have already forgotten; even if we remembered, we have not time. The new moments are upon us. At every tick of the clock, in every inhabited part of the world, an unimaginable richness and variety of "history" falls off the world into total oblivion. Most of the experiences in "the past as it really was" were instantly forgotten by the subject himself. Of the small percentage which he remembered (and never remembered with perfect accuracy) a smaller percentage was ever communicated even to his closest intimates; of this, a smaller percentage still was recorded; of the recorded fraction only another fraction has ever reached posterity.

In 1959 he wrote an American friend: "A letter from Cuba with no mention of the revolution is rather surprising at first sight. But it might not even be due to caution. I am often struck in reading the records of the past (e.g. letters written during *our* Civil War in the 17th Century) how unimportant the things the historians make so much of seem to have been to the ordinary people who were alive at the time. Does not what we call 'history' in fact leave out nearly the whole of real life?"

As a result of these profound insights Lewis remained remarkably ignorant of political events. As late as 1950 his brother Warren Lewis was startled to discover that Lewis supposed Tito to be King of Greece. In other matters he was simply ingenuous: he accepted the opinion of an American student that Joseph McCarthy was a "potential Hitler."

Perhaps his reaction to such geopolitical news as reached him is caught in the tone of another letter to his American correspondent: "All you tell me about China is horrible, and I was shocked to read an article the other day about Portugal. I had got the idea that Salazar was (as if such a thing were possible!) a *good* dictator. But apparently Portugal is just like all the other totalitarian countries, indeed worse in one way, for the atrocities are done in the name of Christianity. As a verse in our version of the Psalter says 'All the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations.'" What is striking about this is its naivete, a certain Rip Van Winkle note of awk-

ward surprise at what had been going on around him, a nervous recourse to sententiousness in the absence of a sure grasp of the facts. His uncertainty here is nothing akin to his logical urbanity on subjects nearer to his heart.

Still, it is possible to collect a number of what would be called his “positions on the issues.” He tended to favor capital punishment. He had some respect for pacifism but firmly opposed it. He thought theocracy the worst of all forms of government. He disliked the welfare state, though he came to accept certain features of it, principally nationalized medicine. He hated vivisection. He thought homosexuality sinful but saw no point in making it, or any sin as such, a crime. He opposed the ordination of women and thought men should be heads of their families, but he supported full legal equality for women. His ideal society — Christian society — would be at once economically socialist and formally hierarchical (at least this is how, in one of his broadcast talks, he said it would look from outside). He disliked industrialism and commercialism but confessed he saw no remedy; he disliked “collectivism” even more but thought it would almost necessarily increase in scope.

Such a list isn’t very helpful. It includes prejudices and fantasies as well as strongly reasoned views. And on capital punishment he wrote in a letter to the *Church Times*: “I do not know whether capital punishment should or should not be abolished, for neither the natural light, nor scripture, nor ecclesiastical authority seems to tell me. But I am concerned about the grounds on which its abolition is being sought.” He proceeded to refute the arguments advanced by abolitionists.

Lewis was always more concerned with premises and principles than with actual facts and conclusions. One might say he hardly knew the first thing about politics, but this would be the reverse of the truth. He *did* know the first thing about politics, and not much else. This is why he is valuable.

I look on it as the curse of our time that we have so many people who know everything about politics *except* the first thing. They know B through Z, so to speak, without grasping A. And Lewis, for all his topical ignorance, had a very firm grip on A.

Lewis’s ignorance wasn’t merely negligent. He was by nature and

desire apolitical. He wanted to leave politics to others, as far as possible to the constituted authorities, and to enjoy the relatively carefree role of the obedient subject. He preferred to spend his life at Oxford (and, later, at Cambridge) minding his own station and its duties — tutoring students, lecturing, reading and writing, answering mail, caring for his household, drinking tea and ale with his argumentative friends, taking long walks, puffing his pipe. He unabashedly loved the local, the cozy, the familiar: in *The Four Loves* he beautifully celebrates this underrated kind of attachment, affection — the gradually growing love of the people one happens to find oneself among.

But though Lewis preferred to leave politics alone, it didn't return the favor. His writings come up against politics surprisingly often, and not entirely by his choice.

It was inevitable. He was born in 1898, just in time to see one world beginning to give way to another, darker one. A. J. P. Taylor has observed that before 1914 an Englishman (Lewis spent his early years in Northern Ireland) might live his whole life without encountering His Majesty's government except in the forms of the policeman and the post office. By the time Lewis died in 1963 he had fought in a world war, lived through a second, and seen governments swell to undreamed-of magnitude and, it seemed to him, malignity. Men born later think nothing of hearing their rulers (Lewis noted with foreboding that "rulers" had been replaced by "leaders") use phrases like "building a new society," which struck Lewis as colossally arrogant in import.

"We hear too much of the State," he wrote in a 1958 letter. "Government is at its best a necessary evil. Let's keep it in its place." This was his characteristic attitude. But he was by no means a Manchester liberal. He detested most modern inventions and the advertising campaigns that created desires for the needless.

He deplored modern transportation. "I number it among my blessings that my father had no car," he wrote in *Surprised by Joy*. He learned to enjoy the adventure of walking. "The deadly power of rushing about wherever I pleased had not been given me. I measured distances by the standard of man, man walking on his own two feet, not by the standard of the internal combustion engine. I had not been allowed to deflower the very idea of distance; in

return I possessed 'infinite distance' in what would have been to motorists 'a little room.'" Then the plaintive grumble his friends knew so well, though, it seldom found its way into his published writings: "The truest and most horrible claim made for modern transport is that it 'annihilates space.' It does. It annihilates one of the most glorious gifts we have been given. It is a vile inflation which lowers the value of distance, so that a modern boy travels a hundred miles with less sense of liberation and pilgrimage and adventure than his grandfather got from travelling ten. Of course if a man hates space and wants it to be annihilated, that is another matter. Why not creep into his coffin at once? There is little enough space there."

As for space travel, after writing several books on the idea, he confided in a letter to a favorite nun: "I begin to fear the villains really will contaminate the moon." This in 1946! By 1958 he was writing publicly of the prospect, and explicitly hoping that extra-terrestrial creatures would "destroy" any earthlings who invaded their realms. He thought colonialism on this planet had been bad enough.

But rooting for the Martians was not mere sentimentalism. Lewis expected that the first earthlings in space would be the most ruthless, the most coldly technical — the sort of men who on this planet would engage in the experimental torture of animals and even people, who would therefore regard alien beings as mere "specimens."

Lewis heartily disliked what we now call mass communications — a misnomer, since they don't allow the give and take of real communication: unlike conversation, the radio amplifies one side, which is deaf to the responses of the other. Lewis also confessed himself "rather allergic to the films." It doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to guess how he would have reacted to today's TV fare. Young writers seeking his advice were urged to "turn off the radio" and "avoid nearly all magazines."

It is easy to accuse him of reactionary sentimentalism, and of course the charge has been levelled against him. But he had real reasons which deserve reasoned consideration. First, he thought the modern world was making solitude and private conversation difficult to sustain. Second, he thought the instantaneous reporting

of distant events placed on our sympathies and attention burdens they were never meant to bear, to the detriment of concern for things nearer home. Third, the radio (or "wireless"), though ill-suited for conversation, was ideal for propaganda and mass conditioning. He hated advertising; he hated political propaganda more.

Lewis was no primitivist. He believed in civilization. But he refused to identify change with progress. Though he conceded that many changes he disapproved of were probably irreversible — it would never have occurred to him to join an agrarian commune — he saw no point in confusing the inevitable with the good. And if the past was neither recoverable nor ideal, at least we should avoid what his friend Owen Barfield called "chronological snobbery."

Much as he disliked commercialism, with its over-accelerating campaigns to induce us to buy useless things, he didn't look on socialism as any sort of remedy. In fact he regarded collectivism as at best a necessary evil, and beyond necessity an evil pure and simple. One of the reasons he mistrusted material progress was, indeed, that he thought it was likely to lead to totalitarianism. Radio's propaganda power made it a potent tool of mass control. "From this point of view," he warns in *The Abolition of Man*, "What we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument."

Mass communications not only annihilated space, in his view. They also tended to annihilate privacy and to undermine the conditions of intellectual and spiritual freedom. But material progress in itself might have been harmless, or positively benign, had it not been attended by the *cult* of progress. Too many modern men were uncritically turning the limited idea of material improvement into a cosmology of universal advancement. The idea of progress had broken out of its technological pen and invaded the realm of politics, religion, and morals. The metaphysical sanity about man's relation to the ultimate inherent in the moral tradition was seriously eroded.

Lewis was an Oxford student and aspiring poet when he was dispatched to the front lines of the modern world whose existence he had hardly noticed. He went to France as a volunteer in the

British army. In April he was wounded from behind — by a stray British shell. He fought no more.

His good cheer and romantic atheism remained intact. The Great War had no traumatic effect on him: far less than his mother's death when he was nine, certainly less than the boarding school he refers to as "Belsen" (a "concentration camp") in *Surprised by Joy*. He bore no grudge against either his own government or the German enemy. He had fought as a loyal subject, and took his fortune as a good sport. In a series of radio talks titled *Christian Behavior*, Lewis said: "I have often thought to myself how it would have been if, when I served in the first world war, I and some young German had killed each other simultaneously and found ourselves together a moment after death. I cannot imagine that either of us would have felt any resentment or even embarrassment. I think we might have laughed over it."

Not that the Great War had no effect on him. His wounds hospitalized him for months. Several of his close friends were killed. But the war had no *philosophical* impact on him. It is interesting to compare him with his exact contemporary Ernest Hemingway, who was wounded in Italy at about the same time. Hemingway had made much of the war afterward; but then he had rushed to join it, in Italy, before the United States was involved, when there was no need to do so. The difference suggests that the "impact" of the war on each had much to do with the attitude each brought to it in the first place. For Lewis it was a casual duty; for Hemingway a vital test and passage into manhood.

Unlike many others, Lewis easily resumed private life after the war — supporting the widowed mother of a friend who had died in the battle — and never dwelt on his experience. He remembered the horrors well enough — "the horribly smashed men still moving like half-crushed beetles, the sitting or standing corpses" — but he remembered best the moments between the episodes of fighting. Even in his autobiography his chapter on the war says less about the battle than about the reading he managed to squeeze in!

Like all public events, or "history," the war struck him as incidental to his real life. He later wrote: "It is too cut off from the rest of my experience and often seems to have happened to someone else. It is even in a way unimportant. One imaginative moment

seems now to matter more than the realities that followed. It was the first bullet I heard — so far from me that it ‘whined’ like a journalist’s or a peacetime poet’s bullet. At that moment there was something not exactly like fear, much less like indifference: a little quavering signal that said, ‘This is War. This is what Homer wrote about.’”

Even that is notable because it is so unlike what used to be the fashionable way of remembering the Great War. Instead of disillusioning Lewis or blasting any expectation he held of a peaceful and progressive modern world, the sound of battle merely reinforced his sense of tradition, of perennial human experience. Though it was Lewis, not Hemingway, who frankly described his own temperament as “Romantic,” it was Hemingway, not Lewis, who milked the war for literary *Weltschmerz*. “Public affairs vex no man,” Samuel Johnson observed. That may be less true than it once was, but the difference between Lewis and Hemingway tends to support Lewis’s suspicion that it they vex us more today, if “history” and “politics” dominate our minds more than they used to, it is not altogether against our will. People *choose* participation in what they think of as great events; it lends excitement to their lives. And this, in turn, enlarges the scope of public affairs, aggravating the problem of the political usurpation of private life.

Lewis’s senior devil Screwtape, advising young Wormwood in the arts of seducing a human subject, thinks the substitution of public for private concerns is a fine technique: “Do what you will, there is going to be some benevolence, as well as some malice, in your patient’s soul. The great thing is to direct the malice to his immediate neighbors whom he meets every day and to thrust his benevolence out to the remote circumference, to people he does not know. The malice thus becomes wholly real and the benevolence largely imaginary.”

In a latter letter Screwtape adds a subtle twist: religion itself can be corrupted by being politicized. “Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing. Provided that meetings, pamphlets, policies, movements, causes, and crusades, matter more to him than prayers and sacra-

ments and charity, he is ours — and the more ‘religious’ (on those terms), the more securely ours. I could show you a pretty cageful down here.”

By the same token, Screwtape cautions Wormwood against being too jubilant about the outbreak of a second world war. “Of course a war is entertaining,” he acknowledges. “But what permanent good it does it do us unless we make use of it for bringing souls to Our Father Below?” Dangers and emergencies often cause people to think of death, the state of their souls, and God. The war will have to be exploited delicately. Screwtape argues similarly that it may be risky to induce a man to commit spectacular sins which may force him to consider his spiritual condition. “Do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out in the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one — the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”

Between the wars Lewis lived quietly at Oxford, sharing his lodgings with Mrs. Moore as he had promised her son he would. In the hundreds of his published letters from this period there is hardly a mention of politics. Once — in 1933 — he ridicules one of Hitler’s diatribes against the Jews. Later, when “history” is preoccupied with Hitler, Lewis is calmly discussing Oxford life, Wagner’s music, books he has read, walks he has taken.

Oddly enough, the second world war agitated him far more strongly than the one he had fought in. His lay sermon “Learning in War-Time” defends private studies as a legitimate Christian vocation even during battle, but in it Lewis admitted, for the first time, that the war had left his hope of a normal career in teaching “shattered.”

From now on things were to be different. England herself was under attack, of course, but it was more than that: World War II affected Lewis as deeply as World War I had affected so many others. Though he had never had optimistic illusions for the modern world, he had also never assumed it would be any worse than the world had been since Adam fell.

But this war seemed to tell him that the world had taken a fatal turn. All the new inventions that had merely annoyed him before now seemed to wear deadly faces. Nor could he simply localize the evil as a Teutonic eruption. Horrible as the Nazi ideology was, its philosophic roots were shared by communists and many socialists and other progressive-minded types. All of them denied the permanence and objective reality of moral law. All held power-philosophies that began by celebrating man's power over nature and ended by reducing man to part of the "nature" to be subjugated. And all denied, at least implicitly, that rulers could have any moral obligation to their subjects. Hitler was doing nothing that H. G. Wells had not provided an ultimate sanction for.

Lewis first made this argument in his radio talks titled *The Case for Christianity*. There he spoke of "the law of human nature," the permanent and little-varying common moral sense of mankind. Unless there was some common standard, he pointed out, it was nonsense for Englishmen to say the Nazis were in the wrong; such a condemnation would only amount to an expression of local distaste, the mouse's objection to the cat.

He insisted that there had been broad human consensus through the ages on right and wrong. "Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four. But they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you liked." Nor did the local variations invalidate the fundamental truths: "Think of a country where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double-crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five."

Lewis made this argument most fully in his Riddell Lectures at the University of Durham in 1943, later published as *The Abolition of Man*. "The human mind," he contended, "has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary color, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in." Moral progress, in the sense of refined insights, might be made *within* the moral order (the Tao), but it was impossible to simply scrap the old Tao and make a new one by sheer act of will. Any attempt to do that could have only one result: to shatter the

moral framework that bound man to man. Or, in short, to abolish man.

The error was an old one, with metaphysical sources. Lewis had addressed the fundamental question briefly in *The Problem of Pain* (1940): "It has sometimes been asked whether God commands certain things because they are right, or whether certain things are right because God commands them. With Hooker, and against Dr. Johnson, I emphatically embrace the first alternative. The second might lead to the abominable conclusion (reached, I think, by Paley) that charity is good only because God arbitrarily commanded it — that He might equally well have commanded us to hate Him and one another and that hatred would then have been right." Sheer will — even God's will — can never be the ultimate ground of right.

The doctrine is difficult for modern men. Lewis was to write on it again, in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. In a passage of crucial importance for grasping Lewis's approach to politics, he points out that a long tradition, exemplified in Aristotle, held that the natural law was unalterable. To this ancient view Lewis opposed "the modern theory of sovereignty."

"On this view," Lewis explains, "total freedom to make what laws it pleases, superiority to law because it is the source of law, is the characteristic of every state; of democratic states no less than of monarchical. That doctrine has proved so popular that it now seems to many a mere tautology. We conceive with difficulty that it was ever new because we imagine with difficulty how political life can ever have gone on without it. We take it for granted that the highest power in the State, whether that power is a despot or a democratically elected assembly, will be wholly free to legislate and incessantly engaged in legislation."

He quotes Tyndale: "The King is in this world without lawe and may at his owne lust do right and wrong and shall give accounts to God only." This means, says Lewis, that "rebellion is in all circumstances sinful" — a notion Aristotle, Aquinas, Hooker, and by implication Lewis himself all reject.

Against this view Lewis sets the one that predominated in the medieval world: "The universe itself is a constitutional monarchy. The Almighty Himself repudiates the sort of sovereignty that Tyn-

dale thinks fit for Henry VIII." Grotius held (rightly) that, in Lewis's words, "the Law of Nature, actually derived from God, would be equally binding even if we supposed that no God existed. It is another way of saying that good would still be good even if stripped of all power."

But the modern world has lost the sense of such a transcendent Law:

The new theory makes political power something inventive, creative. Its seat is transferred from the reason which humbly and patiently discerns what is right to the will which decrees what shall be right. And this means that with Hobbes we are already heading, via Rousseau, Hegel, and his twin offspring of the Left and the Right, for the view that each society is totally free to create its own "ideology" and that its members, receiving all their moral standards from it, can of course assert no moral claim against it. The subtle and far-reaching effects of the change, which are still proceeding, may be gauged by the implications of the fact that those who were once called a nation's *rulers* are now almost universally called its *leaders*.

In his inaugural lecture at Cambridge, "De Descriptione Temporum," delivered at about the same time his book appeared, Lewis tried to sum up the change in the modern political atmosphere since the age of Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott:

In all previous ages that I can think of the principal aim of rulers, except at rare and short intervals, was to keep their subjects quiet, to forestall or extinguish widespread excitement, and persuade people to attend quietly to their several occupations. And on the whole their subjects agreed with them. They even prayed (in words that sound curiously old-fashioned) to be able to live "a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" and "pass their time in rest and quietness." But now the organization of mass excitement seems to be almost the normal organ of political power. We live in an age of "appeals," "drives," and "campaigns." Our rulers have become like schoolmasters and are always demanding "keenness." And you notice that I am guilty of a slight archaism in calling them "rulers." "Leaders" is the modern word. I have suggested elsewhere that this is a deeply significant change of vocabulary. Our demand upon them has changed no less than theirs upon us. For of a ruler one asks justice, incorruption, diligence, perhaps clemency; of a leader, dash, initiative, and (I suppose) what people call "magnetism" or "personality."

Or "charisma." Even judges may now be praised for being "activist," that is, for "promoting change." Similarly we may hear scornful talk of a "do-nothing Congress." The presumption is that the health of society may be gauged by the pace of legislation.

But in the same lecture Lewis suggests that the political change

in the modern world is minor when compared with the change brought about by modern machinery (and he was speaking when computers were in their infancy: he may not have known of them). He likens the machine age to such epochs as “the change from stone to bronze, or from a pastoral to an agricultural economy.” He passes over the vast social and economic consequences to the psychological effect of the sheer rate of invention. “How has it come about that we use the highly emotive word ‘stagnation,’ with all its malodorous and malarial overtones, for what other ages would have called ‘permanence’?” And again: “Why does ‘latest’ in advertisements mean ‘best’?” The answer, Lewis proposes, is partly to be found in popular notions of evolution, but even more in “a new archetypal image. It is the image of old machines being superseded by new and better ones.” We now assume “that everything is provisional and soon to be superseded, that the attainment of goods we have never yet had, rather than the defense and conservation of those we have already, is the cardinal business of life.”

It is clear that Lewis thought this new archetypal image had affected — we may as well say infected — politics. There being no permanent norms of law and society, it became perfectly natural to demand new laws and even new societies. We even hear of a “new morality.” In fact we are so used to that kind of talk we scarcely give it a second thought. Even more today than when Lewis lived and died it has become our public idiom.

The heresy that Will was the source of Right was old; perhaps even perennial. But in our time it had acquired tremendous cultural and material force, and politics was fast becoming the arena of the Abolition of Man. Lewis’s ultimate expression of the horror of this process is imaginative: it occurs in his novel *That Hideous Strength*, where an elite of scientifically trained technocrats is intent on exterminating most of the human race in order to insure the dominance of their own “inner circle.”

Their lust for total power is fused with an envious hatred of all the spontaneous and innocent forms of life they want to believe are their inferiors. They want to be gods. They refuse the condition of being mere creatures. They reject any moral communion with their fellow-creatures. They want a world “disinfected” of life itself — like the Moon, as one of them says. Though they have mastered

the disinfected cant of political liberalism — “a solution of the unemployment problem, the cancer problem, the housing problem, the problems of currency, of war, of education . . . a brighter, cleaner, and fuller life for our children,” etc. — this is for exoteric use only. Among themselves they speak a darker language and commune with devils.

It is said that Lewis himself regarded the postwar Labor government as literally diabolical. Be that as it may, he was certainly skeptical of any claims of government to solve social “problems” in any comprehensive way. At bottom he thought the great difference between the modern age and all its predecessors was that it *thought* it was greatly different, liberated from all human tradition and from the moral order itself. It was guilty of hubris.

He found this hubris under seemingly “humanitarian” guises, as in the drive to abolish capital punishment. In their way the abolitionists struck him as less humane than the hangman and the headsman. At least the old executioners never presumed to “cure” the men they killed: they treated them as their equals — as men who by their deeds had *deserved* to die under the great law that embraced all alike. Under the “humanitarian” theory, on the other hand, “the criminal ceases to be a person, a subject of rights and duties, and becomes merely an object on which society can work. And this is, in principle, how Hitler treated the Jews. They were objects; killed not for ill desert but because, on his theories, they were a disease in society. If society can mend, remake, and unmake men at its pleasure, its pleasure may, of course, be humane or homicidal. The difference is important. But, either way, rulers have become owners.”

Lewis complained repeatedly of “the growing exaltation of the collective and the growing indifference to persons.” He did not live to read *The Gulag Archipelago*; he could not have known (and even we will never know) how many millions of people have been branded “reactionary elements” and shot like so many diseased cattle.

But he saw with prophetic clarity where bad principles led. He looked on modern politics not as an activist but as an innocent bystander and as one of many prospective victims of a “progressive” new social order. When the communist polemicist J. B. S.

Haldane accused him of being conservative because he would “stand to lose by social change,” Lewis replied with a tartness unusual for him: “Indeed it would be hard for me to welcome a change which might well consign me to a concentration camp.”

Despite his private animadversions against the Labor government and the welfare state, Lewis had no party commitments. He looked on politics with a general and increasing distaste for what it was becoming. His mind didn’t incline him to dwell on monstrous personalities and massive atrocities; these were only extreme eruptions of a more pervasive condition. He could be quite indignant about minor infringements of privacy and liberty, because he cared above all for principle. In 1954, when the Tories had resumed power, he wrote to a civil servant: “I do think the State is increasingly tyrannical and you, inevitably, are among the instruments of that tyranny . . . This doesn’t matter for you who did most of your service when the subject was still a free man. For the rising generation it will become a real problem at what point the policies you are ordered to carry out have become so iniquitous that a decent man must seek some other profession.”

As an instance of the petty tyranny he saw growing in England he has his devil Screwtape, in a late appearance, observe happily to a devils’ banquet: “I heard the other day that in that country a man could not, without a permit, cut down his own tree with his own axe, make it into planks with his own saw, and use the planks to build a toolshed in his own garden.” One didn’t have to be “political” at all to encounter politics, nor criminal to run afoul of the State. One only had to want a toolshed. If political power was a “necessary evil,” at least it was necessary. Lewis never denied that. But he regarded as unhealthy the desire to collectivize life *praeter necessitatem*. And he hated the pretensions of the State to be any *more* than a necessary evil.

He did not hold a rigid view of how much collectivism might be required. He conceded that the growth of the State was probably irreversible, just as he admitted that he saw no way to back out of much of the commercialism he deprecated. But he was suspicious of all who wanted it to grow. A right-minded man would want to minimize it.

In later years he was reconciled to certain features of the welfare

state, especially National Health Service. He said as much to his ailing American correspondent in 1959: "What you have gone through begins to reconcile me to our Welfare State of which I have said so many hard things. 'National Health Service' with free treatment for all has its drawbacks — one being that Doctors are incessantly pestered by people who have nothing wrong with them. But it is better than leaving people to sink or swim on their own resources."

But even here it is important to note that he was speaking of an emergency provision. He was by no means implying that he would prefer a totally centralized and planned society to a basically free one. Far from planning citizens' lives for them, socialized medicine was merely a way of coping with the unforeseeable side of life.

He believed in democracy and political equality (though he wanted to retain the British monarchy). In his sermon on "Membership," however, he is careful to explain why. He believed "fallen men to be so wicked that not one of them can be trusted with irresponsible power over his fellows." God had created authority; man had abused it. Lord Acton was right about power corrupting.

The only remedy has been to take away the powers and substitute a legal fiction of equality. The authority of father and husband has been rightly abolished on the legal plane, not because this authority is in itself bad (on the contrary, it is, I hold, divine in origin), but because fathers and husbands are bad. Theocracy has been rightly abolished not because it is bad that learned priests should govern ignorant laymen, but because priests are wicked men like the rest of us. Even the authority of man over beast has had to be interfered with because it is constantly abused.

Having said all this, Lewis adds: "But the function of equality is purely protective. It is medicine, not food." He thought that in the Christian home the authority of father and husband should ordinarily obtain, with the law acting as a backup in those cases where man foiled the divine plan. And he knew failure would be frequent. He opposed the sentimental idealization of the family. "Since the Fall no organization or way of life whatever has a natural tendency to go right."

But of course this rule included the State too — and Lewis would probably agree that rulers haven't excelled fathers in charity, affection, or even justice. He decried "membership in a debased modern sense — a massing together of persons as if they were

pennies or counters.” And he deplored the needless application of the merely civic fiction of equality to the intimate situation of the household. Parents who encourage their children to address them by their Christian names “are trying to inoculate the child with the preposterous view that one’s mother is simply a fellow citizen like anyone else, to make it ignorant of what all men know and insensible to what all men feel. They are trying to drag the featureless repetitions of the collective into the fuller and more concrete world of the family.” Equality, like political power, should never be introduced *praeter necessitatem*.

In *The Four Loves* Lewis explains that affection, friendship, eros, and charity have their own proper rules and can’t be bound by the formal rules that apply to public life. Private life — real life, finally — transcends the prescriptions of law and etiquette alike. We do violence to the most vital parts of our lives when we needlessly import public, let alone political, standards into them. At home, ideally, we should be free of mere law. And in a sentence of Dr. Johnson’s that Lewis loved to quote, “To be happy at home is the end of all human endeavor.”

But Lewis felt that the State was beginning to close in even on the home. He wouldn’t have been surprised by a recent Swedish law defining spanking as child abuse. “The modern State exists not to protect our rights but to do us good or make us good — anyway, to do something to us or to make us something. Hence the new name ‘leaders’ for those who were once ‘rulers.’ We are less their subjects than their wards, pupils, or domestic animals. There is nothing left of which we can say to them, ‘Mind your own business.’ Our whole lives *are* their business.”

He saw that State and those rulers as intent on liquidating the middle classes — “the bearers of what little moral, intellectual, or economic vitality remains.” In ceasing to protect the rights of free men and actually undermining freedom at every turn, the modern State was destroying its own legitimacy. Englishmen were “tax-ridden.” And in return — what?

According to the classical political theory of this country we surrendered our right of self-protection to the State on condition that the State would protect us. Roughly, you promised not to stab your daughter’s murderer on the understanding that the State would catch him and hang him. Of

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course this was never true as a historical account of the genesis of the State. The power of the group over the individual is by nature unlimited and the individual submits because he has to. The State, under favorable conditions (they have ceased), by defining that power, limits it and gives the individual a little freedom.

But the classical theory morally grounds our obligation to civil obedience; explains why it is right (as well as unavoidable) to pay taxes, why it is wrong (as well as dangerous) to stab your daughter's murderer. At present the very uncomfortable position is this: the State protects us less because it is unwilling to protect us against criminals at home and manifestly grows less and less able to protect us against foreign enemies. At the same time it demands from us more and more. We seldom had fewer rights and liberties nor more burdens: and we get less security in return. While our obligations increase their moral ground is taken away.

Screwtape in his final appearance gloats that "penal taxes" are destroying private education. Soon only state education will remain, and the total collectivization of England will be within sight. For the object of state education will be to make all its products uniform. The educators will be, in reality, the poultry-keepers, fattening up the young birds to be devoured.

As a teacher Lewis naturally took a special interest in the fate of education. He emphatically thought it was a realm that should be private, hierarchical, aristocratic in the sense of being devoted to excellence. But he saw state education as devoted to equality in a debased sense: equality as uniform servility.

I believe a man is happier, and happy in a richer way, if he has "the free-born mind." But I doubt whether he can have this without economic independence, which the new society is abolishing. For economic independence allows an education not controlled by Government; and in adult life it is the man who needs, and asks, nothing of Government who can criticize its acts and snap his fingers at its ideology. Read Montaigne; that's the voice of a man with his legs under his own table, eating the mutton and turnips raised on his own land. Who will talk like that when the State is everyone's schoolmaster and employer?

But in the "new society" the equality would not even be genuine. In actuality there would be — there was already emerging — "a new, real, ruling class: what has been called the Managerial Class." As state education was perverting real education by making it an instrument of levelling, so the new ruling class was perverting culture into "culture": a system of initiating men into "little unofficial, self-appointed aristocracies." Lewis dubbed this form of elitism

“Charientocracy” — rule by the (nominally) cultured.

As he described it, the Charientocrats used art and literature as devices for certifying the “orthodox responses” that qualify aspirants for membership. The spontaneous personal love of the components of “culture” — Virgil or Shakespeare — would wither away; young men and women would learn to strike the right attitudes purely as a means of getting their credentials. In his essay “Lilies That Fester” Lewis writes drily: “Somewhere (I have not yet tracked it down) there must be a kind of *culture*-mongers’ central bureau which keeps a sharp look-out for deviationists.” What ought to be the intimate encounter between pupil and poet gets turned into an occasion for displaying solidarity with the Charientocracy.

Clearly there is a tremendous amount of affectation in the modern consumption of the arts. One attends concerts and exhibitions as a form of self-exhibition. The more obscure the work, the better it serves to allow us to play the role of contrite bourgeois before the altar of *culture*. One is thereby cleansed of any vulgar middle-class stain and qualified for membership among the elect few. “In the highest aesthetic circles one now hears nothing about the artist’s duty to us. It is all about our duty to him. He owes us nothing; we owe him ‘recognition,’ even though he has never paid the slightest attention to our tastes, interests, or habits. If we don’t give it to him, our name is mud. In this shop, the customer is always wrong.” Less and less do artists and critics speak simply and frankly of “good” work: “They begin to prefer words like ‘significant,’ ‘important,’ ‘contemporary,’ or ‘daring.’” Lewis likens these words to the “snobbish incantations” of advertising.

In one of his key essays (originally a sermon), “The Inner Ring,” Lewis speaks with rare discernment of “the lust for the esoteric, the longing to be inside” — inside those unofficial and almost indefinable elites that exist within almost all formal societies — and goes so far as to call this “one of the great permanent mainsprings of human action.” The “inner ring” is a kind of diabolical inversion of friendship. Its essence lies in the delicious sense of belonging to a fellowship from which others are excluded. And the exclusion is what gives it its flavor.

Lewis illustrates this point again and again — in *The Screwtape*

Letters, in *That Hideous Strength*. Groups whose cohesion lies in a shared contempt for outsiders are always, for him, the social expression of the primary human sin: pride. One reason Lewis could never have been a Marxist was that he realized how feeble economic motives are beside pride and its correlative vices, “the deadly serious passions of envy, self-importance, and resentment.”

When one is alerted to the theme of Envy especially — that most underrated of sins — it is remarkable how often one finds it in Lewis’s writing. Screwtape comments gleefully on its uses — “the spirit of *I’m as good as you*.”

No man who says *I’m as good as you* believes it. He would not say it if he did. The St. Bernard never says it to the toy dog, nor the scholar to the dunce, nor the employable to the bum, nor the pretty woman to the plain. The claim to equality, outside the strictly political field, is made only by those who feel themselves to be in some way inferior. What it expresses is precisely the itching, smarting, writhing awareness of an inferiority which the patient refuses to accept.

And therefore resents. Yes, and therefore resents every kind of superiority in others; denigrates it; wishes its annihilation.

And in one of his letters to the American lady he writes: “I have long known that the talk about Brotherhood, wherever it occurs, in America or here, is hypocrisy. Or rather, the man who talks it means ‘I have no superiors’: he does *not* mean ‘I have no inferiors.’ How loathsome it all is!”

Lewis more than once remarked that he had never known a society so bitterly competitive as the boarding school he had attended as a boy. In *Surprised by Joy* he recalls:

Spiritually speaking, the deadly thing was that school life was a life almost wholly dominated by the social struggle; to get on, to arrive, or, having reached the top, to remain there, was the absorbing preoccupation. It is often, of course, the chief preoccupation of adult life as well; but I have not yet seen any adult society in which the surrender of this impulse was so total. And from it, at school as in the world, all sorts of meanness flow; the sycophancy that courts those higher in the scale, the cultivation of those it is well to know, the speedy abandonment of friendships that will not help on the upward path, the readiness to join the cry against the unpopular, the secret motive in almost every action. The Wyvernians seem to me in retrospect to have been the least spontaneous, in that sense the least boyish, society I have ever known. It would perhaps not be too much to say that in some boys’ lives everything was calculated to the great end of advancement.

Two pages later he adds:

What an answer, by the by, Wyvern was to those who derive all the ills of society from economics! For money had nothing to do with its class system. It was not (thank Heaven) the boys with threadbare coats who became Punts, nor the boys with plenty of pocket money who became Bloods. According to some theorists, therefore, it ought to have been entirely free from bourgeois vulgarities and iniquities. Yet I have never seen a community so competitive, so full of snobbery and flunkeyism, a ruling class so selfish and so class-conscious, or a proletariat so fawning, so lacking in all solidarity and sense of corporate honor.

Lewis thinks such schools may have helped produce one of the least likeable phenomena in England: “a bitter, truculent, skeptical, debunking, and cynical *intelligentsia*.” The rising Charientocracy perhaps had its roots in the “inner rings” (or in exclusion therefrom) in what the English call their public schools. When Lewis moved from Magdalen College, Oxford, to Magdalène College, Cambridge, he wrote to his American correspondent: “I think I shall like Magdalene better than Magdalen. It’s a tiny college (a perfect cameo architecturally) and they’re all so old fashioned, and pious, and gentle and conservative — unlike this leftist, atheist, cynical, hard-boiled, huge Magdalen.”

Lewis recognized what is seldom noticed or discussed nowadays: that a good deal of the energy of leftism comes not from a hunger for justice (there is little enough of that when leftist regimes come to power) but from raw envy. Socialism in general solves few economic problems — in fact it causes or aggravates them — but it does solve, for the socialist rulers themselves at least, the problem of status. As Dr. Johnson noted, levellers want to level down, not up, to themselves.

In his magisterial study *Envy*, the sociologist Helmut Schoeck has observed that there is a kind of taboo on mentioning sheer resentment of others’ good fortune as an important motive in human affairs. This is a remarkable fact: every culture has a word for envy; the Church has always ranked it among the deadly sins; Plutarch, Dante, and Shakespeare speak readily of it as actuating wicked acts. And people who enjoy high rank and great wealth — or even natural gifts like beauty — are uneasily aware of the malice their position stirs in their inferiors. Next to envy greed, for example, is a rather feeble motive. After all, status is often the end

for which money is desired and sacrificed; and status, which means relative social position, is, far more than absolute good fortune in a material sense, the motive for envy.

Lewis understood this with the sturdy realism of a classical Christian moralist. Screwtape hardly mentions greed as a temptation; he is only marginally interested in lust, sloth, gluttony. But he constantly urges Wormwood to harp on old, persistent, chafing slights and resentments. Pride, especially wounded pride, is his favored avenue of seduction. That is what makes him so plausible. And so devilishly funny.

"Pride is *essentially* competitive," Lewis says in *Christian Behavior* (later incorporated into *Mere Christianity*). It is "the great sin." And its opposite, humility, is the condition of the great virtue, charity. To the American lady he writes: "I suppose (tho' it seems a hard saying) we should mind humiliation less if we were humbler. It is, at any rate, a form of suffering which we can try to offer, in our small way, along with the supreme humiliation of Christ Himself. There is, if you notice, a very great deal in the N.T. about His humiliations as distinct from His sufferings in general."

Pride, says Lewis, actually spurs greed and power-lust. It explains the insatiability of people who to all appearances have more than enough. It explains revenge. "It is Pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began. Other vices may sometimes bring people together: you may find good fellowship and jokes and friendliness among drunken people or unchaste people. But Pride always means enmity — it *is* enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God."

No structural reform of society can possibly eliminate Pride. At best its effects can be modified. Pride is at the very center of Lewis's view of man — the orthodox Christian view. That is why he is no utopian, but — by current standards — a rather pessimistic democrat. We must be careful in using words like "pessimistic" to describe Lewis's outlook. He never cultivated gloom; on the contrary, his work is explicitly about *joy*.

He did oppose false hopes — hopes which experience has amply proved false. He realized, as any sensible man must, that "history" isn't the arena of human salvation. Screwtape knows this too,

which is why he is so eager for us to forget it. The worship of “history” is the idolatry of our time, and millions of people think of politics as the way we can apprehend and control the shape of history and the collective destiny of mankind (there being no other destiny to speak of).

Against this widespread delusion Lewis pointed out how little we know of the past and even the present, to say nothing of the future. But to thoroughly politicized people — the sort of people for whom the right kind of politics is the measure of one’s compassion and benevolence — this modest realism seems a kind of treason. It amounts to a malign refusal to hope — “just as, to this day, everyone talks as if St. Augustine *wanted* unbaptized infants to go to Hell.” This is the attitude that assumes that the Church would change the moral law if only it *wanted* people to have happy sex lives. (I have never understood why those who essentially deny the Church’s authority should think the Church could revise God’s law, or why they even attach any importance to the matter.)

If such people condemn Lewis’s kind of conservatism as “reactionary,” he never reciprocated their anathemas. He had too little political passion, and too much personal charity, to do so. More important, he was as realistic in theology as in politics. He understood that God damns nobody for political error. Screwtape complains: “That is where He is so unfair. He often makes prizes of humans who have given their lives for causes He thinks bad on the monstrously sophisticated ground that the humans thought them good and were following the best they knew.”

To put it in clumsy but familiar terms, Lewis was objective even about the subjective. He believed in reason and its importance; he also knew that people often, through no fault of their own, reason badly. Honest error may be disastrous, but it is never sinful.

Precisely because he knew that politics is of secondary importance he deprecated political acrimony and warned of the spiritual danger of being right in the wrong spirit. In his essay “Dangers of National Repentance” he observes the subtle temptation to repent of sins you haven’t personally committed, to say “we” when you really mean “they.” Most people who say “Our country has sinned” mean not “I too have sinned” but “My countrymen (excluding me and my party) have sinned.” You may thereby appear humble

when you are actually being proud. "You can indulge in the popular vice of detraction without restraint, and yet feel all the time that you are practicing contrition."

Of course our public life should be, this side theocracy ("the worst of all governments"), under God. The State must take its modest place within the Tao. But our real destiny is neither public nor political. It is in the ultimate privacy of the encounter with God.

As far as politics went, Lewis worried most about the destruction of privacy. "We live," he writes, "in a world starved for solitude, silence, and privacy, and therefore starved for meditation and true friendship." The modern world strives "to make Christianity a private affair while banishing all privacy."

But he flatly rejected any definition of religion as "what a man does with his solitude." Christianity was from the start a *social* religion — a religion of companionship, common worship, mutual support, and works of mercy. The creeds proclaim the Communion of Saints. Our Lord commands us to feed the hungry and heal the sick. Our love of God shows, and will finally be measured, in our love for our neighbors. The cure for collectivism, Lewis warns, is not individualism.

What is left, then? Membership. We are to be members of one Mystical Body. Each of us must find his own proper place within the whole. But this membership belongs to private life. It is utterly beyond the power of any State planner, who must regard us all as mere units, to prescribe.

Though he rejected individualism as a social philosophy, Lewis did, after all, consider the individual as an end — so much so that Christ had died as much for each man as if he had been the only man. And he was naturally concerned about the extinction of individual differences. As the modern world tended to mass-produce men, it inevitably tended to make them all alike. In a 1928 letter to his father he mused: "I wonder is there some influence abroad now-a-days that prevents the growth of rich, strongly marked personal peculiarities. Are any of our contemporaries 'characters' as Queen Victoria or Dizzy or Carlyle were 'characters'?" In a later essay on Addison he noted (not altogether with disapproval) that a long "reform of manners" had largely done away with the old

flamboyance of the age of aristocracy. Obviously there was much to be said for the change; just as obviously, it could be carried too far.

Even in the life of Oxford Lewis regretted what he saw in the change from small seminars to large lecture courses, while fewer and fewer students knew how to enjoy “those solitary walks, or walks with a single companion, which built the minds of the previous generations.” Nearing his fiftieth year we find him writing to Greeves: “My own pupils still seem to me in many ways older than I. Indeed (nice men as many of them are) I am a little worried by the fact that so few of them seem ever to have had youth as we had it. They have all read all the correct, ‘important’ books: they seem to have no private & erratic imaginative adventures of their own.”

As “history” and politics prescribed a set of correct attitudes, so *culture* was coming to prescribe a fixed and uniform course of reading. One of the key books in Lewis’s own life was George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*, an old copy of which he had found at a used book stall: he read many books that way, with no idea what they were, let alone of their “importance.” If he had stuck to the official reading lists, he would never have launched the rediscovery of MacDonald, a very great preacher and myth-maker. Lewis could hardly imagine life without solitary excursions of all kinds: but modern life was turning out to be something vastly unlike the life of his youth.

The change accorded well with the Screwtape strategy. In “Screwtape Proposes a Toast,” the old devil apologizes to his peers for the “insipid” fare of human souls — “or such residual puddles of what once was soul” — on which they are presently feasting. “Oh, to get one’s teeth again into a Farinata, a Henry VIII, or even a Hitler! There was real crackling there; something to crunch; a rage, an egotism, a cruelty only just less robust than our own.”

But, he points out, there is a bright side. “Consider, first, the mere quantity. The quality may be wretched; but we never had souls (of a sort) in more abundance.” By perverting the ideas of democracy and equality, he argues, Satan’s forces have been able to seduce modern men *en masse*. What has been lost in great sinners has been more than made up for by the sheer multiplicity of petty, passive sinners for whom damnation is the result of

merely following fashion and the mediocre spirit of the age.

Screwtape attaches special importance to controlling the social environment, especially through the device of mass state education. The great achievement has been to instill an actual desire for mass uniformity. As a result, "Their consciousness hardly exists apart from the social atmosphere that surrounds them. And of course we have contrived that their very language should be all smudge and blur."

Screwtape had long recognized the possibilities of social conformity. In his earlier letters he counsels Wormwood to get his man into the proper social set, a group of cynical sophisticates, what Lewis would call an Inner Ring, where the man would willingly annihilate his own genuine individuality: "He will be silent when he ought to speak and laugh when he ought to be silent. He will assume, at first only by his manner, but presently by his words, all sorts of cynical and sceptical attitudes which are not really his. But if you play him well, they may become his. All mortals tend to turn into the thing they are pretending to be."

For Lewis the Inner Ring tended to blend into the larger environment of the *Zeitgeist*, where people were preoccupied not with the Good and the True but with the fashionable, the "modern," the "important" — the atmosphere in which it is all-important to be *au courant* and whatever is in vogue is assumed to be "the results of modern investigation." A whole age could have a kind of collective egoism, a contempt for the past as such — what Lewis's friend Owen Barfield termed "chronological snobbery," but which was called by its votaries "the Historical Point of View." (Screwtape is forever urging the uses of the Historical Point of View.) Lewis constantly urged the reading of old books, not because our ancestors were always right but simply because they were *different*, and therefore unlikely to make the same errors we make. Those who dismissed the past *in toto* just because it was old were denying themselves the corrective power of a different point of view.

If any theme was close to Lewis's heart, it was that reality is "full of surprises" and that the healthy mind welcomes surprise. For this reason true society enhances individuality. The Inner Ring — where shared prejudices are perpetually reinforced — is only a perversion of friendship, which brings out the unexpected in oneself. Unlike

Eros, which is jealous and exclusive, real Friendship is inclusive and expansive: as the circle of Friendship grows, it enriches all the relations within it. "In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald's reaction to a specifically Caroline joke. Far from having more of Ronald, having him 'to myself' now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald."

Lewis shows that other kinds of love involve surprise too. Affection and Charity tie us to our neighbors, those who just happen to be nearby. We love them not because we find them either deserving or congenial, but because they are there. And in Eros we love the beloved precisely because of a certain element of mysterious opacity. Eros, he stresses, is not lust: it begins not with desire but with wonder; with joy. What we rejoice in is difference, not only *la difference* between the sexes, but the difference between her and the rest of her sex.

In the surprise of love we become ourselves. That is why society is necessary. The larger background of a more abstract "society" is secondary to the intimate level of companionship where we exercise Affection, Friendship, Eros, and Charity.

But surprise, by definition, can't be planned. Neither can true society, for just that reason. In all forms of love we meet the mystery of God's creation, the very thing that separates them from the realm of public life and politics. They follow their own rules; often they make their own rules as they go along. The collective view must of necessity abstract from the unique and the unpredictable, fastening for its own (often legitimate) purposes on the least interesting features of human beings: their common denominator.

But a wise politics will also bear in mind that what human beings have in common is their mutual difference. True equality among all must respect the uniqueness of each — a uniqueness that can only emerge fully in privacy, out of the State's sight. God loves every creature for a different reason, and that is why the State must leave all of them alone. The creature needs time for the Creator too: a chance to be happy at home.

Guilt and the Moral Revolution

James Hitchcock

THE POLICE GAZETTE, probably America's most popular "men's magazine" of the late nineteenth century, was fond of comments like "They drink the way clergymen drink — on the sly." Clergy were almost never mentioned in the journal except as self-righteous hypocrites, secretly addicted to the vices which they publicly condemned.

Such a conceit is surely one of the most rooted and even primitive of human instincts — to shout "you're one too" at anyone whose social task it is to announce moral judgments. In fact it was probably a minority of American clergy who condemned drink totally even in 1895, and it was certainly a tiny minority who were secret tipplers or adulterers. But it was a necessary part of the *Police Gazette's* view of the world to imply that any moral censure directed at itself or its readers was poisoned at the source.

In the second half of the twentieth century the closest approximation of the *Police Gazette* in America has been Hugh Hefner's *Playboy*. The *Gazette* seems for the most part to have been read in saloons and barber shops. *Playboy* was for a long time sold under the counter and kept hidden in the bottom of drawers at home. But unlike the *Gazette*, *Playboy* finally achieved respectability. In 1980 Hefner was the guest of honor at a testimonial fete whose host was the senior senator from Illinois, Charles Percy.

The revolution which made *Playboy* respectable was to a great extent a self-propelled revolution. It was Hefner who pulled the strings that turned himself and his empire from pariahs into comfortable fixtures of the establishment. Many means were used to that end, including the lavish distribution of money to persuade respectable people to write for the magazine. Part of the means was also Hefner's tedious, seemingly interminable "playboy philosophy," spun out through issue after issue during the 1960's.

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Almost no one ever made a serious study of Hefner's turgid prose, and it is doubtful if very many people even read it carefully. But the playboy philosophy was so repetitive that it was not necessary to read it regularly in order to understand it. Occasional samples were sure to yield a microcosm of the whole.

Those who took such samples were treated to something rather similar to the *Police Gazette's* jibes at the clergy. But whereas the *Gazette* had merely dealt a few glancing blows, *Playboy* aimed at nothing less than the total discrediting of those who held to traditional sexual morality. Even Hefner's audience would probably have been sceptical of the claim that all moralists secretly practice the vices they condemn, although he implied as much from time to time. His guns were trained higher, and his bold claim was that traditional moralists, whether or not they practice what they preach, are rigid, insecure, unloving, and destructive.

The *Police Gazette* was content to claim that its readers were no worse than the common run of humanity and that those who claimed to be better were the same under the skin. *Playboy* went a step farther — those who fall under the censure of moralists are themselves superior to those who condemn them. In Hefner's world vice came to be virtue and virtue vice, and the "immoralists" were revealed as those whose morality, essentially that of "openness" and "tolerance," is actually superior.

Both Hefner and Richard K. Fox, the publisher of the *Police Gazette*, exploited one of the most basic of human impulses — that of denying one's own moral culpability by calling attention to that of others, particularly one's accusers. (It is the instinctive weapon of children caught in some transgression.) To a degree it touches a sensitive moral point — when we contemplate our own sins, who can condemn others?

But it also misses the point. Good preachers have always spoken in the first person in condemning sin, and it is finally irrelevant whether moralists themselves have clean hands. The purpose of the Fox-Hefner strategy is not to deepen public awareness of sin by revealing more of it, but to deny all sin by implying that virtue itself is not real. The moralist is subjected to scrutiny not as a flawed individual but precisely as a representative of the moral

order. What is held up to ridicule is not the man but the morality which he represents.

Friedrich Nietzsche discovered what he called "*ressentiment*" at the root of Christian morality. Put simply, it is the revenge of life's losers against those whom they see placed over them.¹ Thus, according to Nietzsche, Christianity gave birth to a "slave morality" in which humility was honored instead of manly pride, meekness over a warrior's boldness, poverty instead of wealth. The lowly Christians avenged themselves on their Roman persecutors finally by erecting a moral structure which, in the name of a higher idealism, destroyed all that the Romans valued.

The phenomenologist philosopher Max Scheler (1874-1928), was fascinated with Nietzsche's concept but also determined to acquit Christianity of the charge. Scheler, while admitting that it is often hard to distinguish genuine Christian love from some form of *ressentiment*, nevertheless insisted that such love is real and has nothing in common with its counterfeits. It is pure and transforming.²

Defined succinctly, Scheler's version of *ressentiment* is the desire to smash pedestals. More fully, he described it as feelings of envy, malice, and resentment directed by the weak and impotent against those who appear nobler, and certainly more privileged, than themselves. It was essential to Scheler's definition that this be largely unconscious. He believed that those who engage in overt acts of hostility — criminals, for example, or a militant proletariat — are less likely to experience *ressentiment*. It is in the nature of the latter to disguise itself. It often erects ambitious and ostensibly idealistic moralities whose real purpose is to get revenge on enemies.

The enemies, however, are not such in the ordinary sense. *Ressentiment* is not directed at those who have perpetrated some specific and undeniable injury or injustice. Properly speaking, *ressentiment* does not even apply to classes of people who might be thought of as oppressors in a Marxist sense. Finally, for Scheler, certain people inspire *ressentiment* simply because of who they are. It is their very existence which is hated, not anything they have done.

Scheler's analysis is most easily seen in a quasi-political context.

In traditional aristocratic societies, for example, conscious thought concedes to the aristocracy their right to a superior position. Unconsciously, however, *ressentiment* builds up, expressing itself, perhaps, in a popular fascination with the misfortunes of the privileged. However, Scheler saw it as expressing itself in certain essentially non-political ways also, for example, the stereotyped prudish censoriousness of the spinster as deriving from her resentment of those who have found in life the happiness which has eluded her.

Social distinctions imply distinctions of worth and thereby invite *ressentiment*. However, the levelling process proves to be endless, because societies which have gone far in the direction of abolishing social distinctions cannot do so perfectly. Some people simply remain more attractive, more creative, more energetic, more talented, more likable than others. Scheler suspected that *ressentiment* would be minimized in modern democratic societies and would be most evident in those societies (England comes to mind) in which an official ideology of equality is at variance with the continued reality of social class. However, in this and in other ways Scheler failed to grasp all the implications of the phenomenon he was describing. For even those societies which have gone far in the abolition of social distinctions merely invite ever more microscopic scrutiny of their structures. The New Left of the 1960's was extremely adept at uncovering remnants of "hypocrisy" among its older liberal allies.

However, Scheler was quite perceptive in noticing that political and class distinctions are finally not at the heart of *ressentiment*. Morality is. It is the claim of some, whether implicit or explicit, conscious or unconscious, to represent an authoritative truth which inspires the bitterest hostility. It might even be argued that all social and political claims imply moral claims and that this is why they are ultimately hated, with political or economic grievances put forth primarily as rationalizations for resentments which go much deeper.

Ressentiment issues in moral nihilism for two reasons. On a superficial level it manifests the *Police Gazette* mentality — those who claim to speak with moral authority must be put in their place, hence morality itself must be discredited. However, if a way could be found to convey moral judgments in some wholly imper-

sonal fashion, the problem would not be obviated. For *ressentiment* is ultimately directed at the fact of morality itself, an authority outside the self by which the self is judged and, virtually always, found wanting. This sense of being under judgment, of always falling short of what one ought to be, can be neurotic and crippling. However, it is also the greatest force for moral improvement within human affairs. The alternative is a self-satisfaction which gradually turns into moral insensitivity and cynicism.

Scheler identified the religious apostate as perhaps the purest example of *ressentiment* — the individual who has rejected a creed once held and has done so with passion and even hatred. The apostate spends the whole of his life at war with his former beliefs, which obviously have a hold over him which remains constantly threatening.

It is in religious apostasy that the real nature of *ressentiment* is also uncovered. For on a conscious and rational level the apostate declares his former beliefs to be false and pernicious. However, if this were the whole of the story such beliefs would simply be thrust out of mind and never recalled. The bitterness of the apostate, his obsession with his rejected faith, is due precisely to his rooted suspicion that his former beliefs are indeed true. He continues to hate his old creed, and often the hatred increases with the years, because it continues to stand in judgment over him. It is because he cannot help suspecting that the creed is indeed true that he hates it with such fury. As Scheler put it, *ressentiment* falsifies values, but the falsification proves to be transparent, and through the false values the outlines of the true ones can still be dimly perceived. *Ressentiment* is directed at something which at the deepest level of his being the individual recognizes as good. Although there may be evil mixed with it (as in the sinful preacher), it is not the evil which is hated primarily but the good. Dwelling on the evil is *ressentiment's* ploy for attacking the good.

The phenomenon of religious apostasy, still a somewhat rarified thing in Scheler's day, is now endemic. It has descended from the realm of the intellectuals to the general populace. There is scarcely a popular magazine, newspaper, or television series in the United States which does not manifest its effects with some degree of regularity. Whereas formerly the prevailing popular view was that reli-

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gion is healthy and comforting, saving the individual from disorder and loss, the mass media now hold that religion is almost always a deforming neurosis, a crippler of the free human spirit, not only a deceit but a destructive one. This idea is now purveyed to the public in countless ways.

An important test of the health of a religion is precisely its ability to produce embittered apostates. Those religions which do not are not genuine. For religion, if it is true to what it is supposed to be, penetrates very deeply into the human person, and of its very essence it holds the individual up to judgment. Modern liberal religion has seen many of its adherents drift away, but it has produced no apostates in the true sense. There is no literature by and about ex-Unitarians. Those who do give up their religious upbringing may express varying degrees of contempt for it, but they cannot hate it and they are never obsessed with it, because it never made a deep enough impression on their personalities for *ressentiment* to develop.

It is no accident that, even in the America of a century ago, anti-religious *ressentiment* clustered around the so-called "personal sins." Given the Victorian reticence about sex, the *Police Gazette* had alcohol as its sore point. In the past twenty years, however, traditional religion has come under ferocious assault, an assault often approaching gale force, because of its teachings about sexual behavior.

Liberal religion has diverted the gale from itself by offering a bland smile and the assurance, "We're not here to lay guilt on you." Much of its intellectual ingenuity has been devoted to finding ways of justifying what human beings actually do, so as to avoid having to pronounce moral judgments. On one level, the strategy has worked — the existence of a large body of "enlightened" clergy, and of entire "enlightened" denominations, is now recognized, and *ressentiment's* attack can be concentrated on those religious figures, mostly Catholics and evangelical Protestants, who remain outside the enlightened consensus. The strategy, however, is extremely short-sighted. A religion which disturbs no one is also a religion which is of little use to anyone. It makes itself irrelevant in the very act of seeking relevance.

The spokesmen for liberal religion protest that it is indeed their

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aim to discomfit people, that they preach a stern gospel of righteous judgment. Their focus, however, is not on personal sin, especially sexuality, but on "social sin," which has numerous political ramifications.

If such preaching were really effective, however, society would be littered with embittered refugees from the liberal churches, endlessly picking at the scabs of their old wounds, just as apostates from the more conservative churches do now. The unadmitted secret is that few people take the social pronouncements of the liberal churches very seriously, however much lip service is paid to their alleged wisdom. Those whose political beliefs already incline them in that direction respond to such pronouncements with enthusiasm. Others may express annoyance or outrage at what they consider a perversion of faith, but for the most part those who do not accept such judgments merely shrug them off.

This has nothing to do with the inherent rightness or wrongness of the judgments themselves but with the nature of social morality. Judgments about sexual morality cut deep precisely because they are judgments about individuals. Whatever excuses might be offered, in the end the individual knows that he alone is responsible for his personal behavior. When he hears a sermon about adultery, divorce, or homosexuality, it either applies or does not apply to his case. Sermons about racism, or "consumerism," or multinational corporations, on the other hand, catch everyone in the net, and since all are guilty none are. The hearer may accuse himself of sin but in a vague way only. He does not see that there is much he can do about the sin, and if everyone is implicated it somehow seems less serious, and less real. Confessing to these "social sins" may even be rather comforting, since in doing so one establishes himself as an enlightened, "honest" person.

It is a testimony to the sincerity of some religious believers, if also to their naivete, that they think the blemishes which stain the face of the churches are the real reason why religion inspires rejection. But sincere seekers after truth have always been able to see beneath those blemishes to the beauty beneath. The argument that moralists are hypocrites is not meant to be taken literally, that is, to mean "If you behaved better I would believe in your creed." It is

merely *ressentiment's* handiest weapon. It is the fact of moral authority which is hated, not its possible abuse.

Scheler made the profound observation that *ressentiment* cannot accept revelation, that is, enlightenment coming to the self from the outside. The term can be understood either naturalistically — in which one defers to the superior wisdom of another — or in the traditional Judaeo-Christian supernatural meaning of the word, and it is basic to modern liberal religion that it cannot accept the concept of divine revelation. Twentieth-century believers have still not fully understood the lesson taught by nineteenth-century atheists like Feuerbach and Nietzsche — it is not the church which is hated but God. So long as God exists man will not be “free.”

The contemporary phenomenon of *ressentiment* is not a simple division between church-members and non-church-members, however. Clergy were ridiculed in the *Police Gazette*. Now, they are eager to appear in *Playboy*. They write articles for it, are happy to be quoted in its pages, and send it letters of commendation. Ironically, it is now often from the pulpit that churchgoers imbibe attitudes of *ressentiment* towards religiously-based morality.

Perceptively, Scheler identified clergy as among those people most prone to *ressentiment*. His explanation was a rather limited one — that clergy must live publicly an ethic of love and forgiveness and must therefore suppress the real feelings of anger and hostility they sometimes experience. The roots go a great deal deeper, however. For a clergyman who takes his calling seriously has an enormous burden laid on his shoulders. Not only must he serve as a vehicle of judgment pronounced on others, thus inviting their personal animosity, he must judge himself even more severely, precisely so that he can with sincerity talk about “we sinners.” From the very nature of their calling clergy seem deeply prone to *ressentiment*, as indeed are all people who take religion seriously. The bitterest apostates are drawn from the ranks of the most devout.

The disarray into which religion has fallen in modern America owes much to this fact. *Ressentiment* in religion is unavoidable; it belongs to the very nature of faithful obedience. Traditionally, however, it has been kept under control by certain disciplines and most of all by the ideal of supernatural love, which Scheler saw as

a means for transcending it. Once, however, a concept of self-fulfillment came to be accepted in religious circles, these deep-seated feelings were bound to be raked up. Much of the energy of religious "reform" in the past two decades has been negative, stemming from a systematic and often fevered assault on all previously respected authorities.

What in fact are the social conditions which encourage *ressentiment*, since it seems to be more prevalent at certain times than others? Scheler is not of the greatest help here. His observations about its sociology seem casual and rather imperceptive. He did not see, for example, what has become apparent in modern America — that a largely democratic society may stimulate the deepest and most radical expressions of *ressentiment*, even though it promotes social equality. So also recent American history suggests that *ressentiment* is by no means a function merely of suppressed animosities. Resentments freely expressed may in fact exacerbate it.

The principal case in point is the cluster of attitudes and activities which can be conveniently linked around the word "encounter." Certain psychological techniques have been perfected whereby people are encouraged and enabled to "get in touch with their feelings," of which suppressed hostilities and forbidden desires are a large part. The act of expression is supposed to be purgative and liberating. However, it is also guilt-inducing, since despite what they may believe at the conscious level, people continue to sense that certain forbidden feelings should never have been acted out. This is particularly the case where their expression has had some tangibly catastrophic effect, such as the breakup of a marriage. Thus the culture of "honesty" and self-disclosure feeds *ressentiment* in circular fashion, the cures exacerbating the disease.

The "me generation" of the 1970's can be seen as the culmination of certain trends dating back at least to World War II. One is a concept of political equality which ends by demanding the literal abolition of all social distinctions, an ideology which no longer distinguishes the moral from the political order but insists that any form of moral judgment pronounced on individual behavior is a violation of personal worth and freedom. (Hence civil liberties for pornographers and criminals become a major crusade calling forth much righteous passion.) The second trend is material prosperity,

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prolonged and general, which encourages the expectation that all their "needs" and wants will be fulfilled. The satisfaction of every instinct comes to be viewed as a quasi-political right, and not only political but moral restrictions come to be viewed as tyrannical. No moral judgment is permitted except those the individual makes on himself, and even here a large industry has sprung up to teach people how to avoid making such judgments.

To an unrecognized degree, popular culture — through the press, television, film, and music — expresses the final surfacing of *ressentiment*, the final assault on every proclaimed moral authority. So completely has this changed from the 1950's, when popular culture celebrated conventional values, that it is truly a revolution.

Like all revolutions, it feeds on the weaknesses of the establishment, not its tyrannies. It is because the guardians of moral authority, especially the clergy but also parents, policemen, judges, and others, are visibly uncertain about their own beliefs, obviously willing to evade the responsibilities given to them, that *ressentiment* now appears so boldly. Such weakness suggests that the moral restraints against which the individual chafes are in fact invalid, disbelieved even by those who are supposed to proclaim them. This encourages overt rebellion. But the authority of the morality sustains at least a modicum of force despite the derelictions of established leaders. This feeds the *ressentiment* of the would-be escapee from morality, and it further feeds an inexplicable hatred of the very "enlightened" authorities who are so careful not to appear censorious. The victim of *ressentiment* hates those authorities for their failure to articulate a coherent moral universe to which the individual can belong, their seeming unwillingness to resolve the rackingly contradictory moral pressures to which he is subjected.

So also the social encouragement which is given not only to the overt expression of animosities but to the repudiation of personal responsibilities merely serves to deepen *ressentiment*. Parents have been told that they have no responsibility to their unborn children, and children in turn refuse to recognize responsibilities to their parents. Husbands and wives, those whose lives have been consecrated by religious vows, and others who have made solemn commitments are systematically instructed that they have no higher

duty than self-fulfillment and that whatever guilt they feel about this is merely the result of early indoctrination.

Yet, as Scheler recognized, *ressentiment* perceives the truth even as it espouses falsehood. There has occurred, in Nietzschean terms, a “transvaluation of values” whereby good is proclaimed as evil and evil as good. But even Nietzsche believed this was possible only to the rare “superman.” In recent times it has been attempted by everyman, and the sometimes hysterical intensity with which it is proclaimed in popular culture shows how precarious has been the revolution.

Abortion is certainly the most dramatic example of this, both because the act itself has gone from the status (*circa* 1960) of a heinous crime to that of almost a virtue and because it is recognized by almost everyone as the chief issue over which the whole moral revolution is being fought.³

On the face of it the moral objections against abortion are virtually unanswerable — that the fetus is a living being who has all the appearances of being human, that in any such situation the benefit of the doubt must surely be given to the victim, that it is not consonant with justice to allow one person absolute power over the life of another, and that the law cannot remain neutral while millions of the unborn are slaughtered. At best defenders of abortion might be expected to argue rather deferentially for permission to use it in a few special instances.

Instead they make the self-evidently absurd claim that there is no moral issue involved at all and that those who raise one are willful obscurantists. It is this kind of whistling in the dark to which the bearers of *ressentiment* must resort in their efforts to effect their revolution.

That the anti-abortion movement is hated with a unique ferocity goes without saying, since it shoulders the task of keeping moral authority alive in the midst of a virtual mass conspiracy to bury it. In time-honored fashion the opponents of abortion are portrayed as vicious fanatics, political troglodytes, or themselves *ressentiment*-laden enemies of sexual fulfillment. The pro-life position must be declared fundamentally irrational, so as to justify not even considering it objectively. (Quite literally it cannot be considered objectively, because it touches too many deep nerves which have

not been safely buried.) The pregnant woman is alternately presented as a hapless victim of forces beyond her control and as a strong and independent character untrammelled by outworn rules. By a transvaluation of values the stigma is placed on the defenders of life, while virtue is ascribed to those who snuff it out.

It is important to recognize, however, that it is not the organized anti-abortion movement itself which is the chief stimulant of this bitterness. It is rather the simple fact of abortion. If the moral sense is indeed rooted in human nature, then the attitude of the enlightened towards it will always be colored by *ressentiment*, and the ferocity of their crusades will be fueled from that source. (It is also a source of rather cool comfort to the defenders of life, since the greatest cause for alarm will come when defenders of abortion no longer show by their bitterness how close their moral nerves still are to the surface. Then they will have truly consolidated their revolution.)

Interestingly, Scheler also identified women as a group as especially prone to *ressentiment*, and the feminist revolution both feeds on that sentiment and further exacerbates it. However, whereas Scheler thought the male-female relationship was the basic cause — woman both acknowledges man's authority and resents it — modern feminism generates *ressentiment* on a deeper basis still — motherhood. Radical feminists have declared themselves independent of motherhood and motherhood itself as deforming. Less radical feminists have come to believe that the demands of motherhood can be treated casually where they conflict with the urge to self-fulfillment. Both insist that no moral guilt attaches to this repudiation and that traditional concepts of motherhood are simply outmoded. But the demands of this eternal bond are not so easily ignored, which accounts for the hysterical ferocity with which they are now denounced.

The feminist revolution and the sexual revolution meet at the point of abortion. For just as the logic of feminism demands abortion (without it a woman is never wholly "free" of the chains of motherhood), so does the logic of a "liberated" sexuality. The contraceptive revolution was supposed to obviate the need for abortion. Instead it has led to its legalization and its multiplication. The official rhetoric of the sexual revolution insists that sexual expe-

rience is wholly free and joyous. The acid test, applied and found applicable, is that it does not "hurt anybody." But in order for it to pass the test, it is necessary first that abortion simply be defined as not hurting anybody. The huge number of abortions now performed in America are a grisly testimony to the real fruits of the sexual revolution, as they are to the revolution wrought by feminism. But *ressentiment* responds to this massive reality in the only way it can — by bitter denial and denunciation of those who insist on raising the moral questions.

America in the 1970's produced a generation of materially comfortable, bored, self-obsessed individuals whose only conviction was to be "open" to all experiences. The inevitable effects of such a culture were asserted, over and over again, to be a spirit of peace, self-fulfillment, tolerance, and love. Instead the very possibility of love was destroyed, if love is thought to require unselfish devotion to another. Rather the most common product of the "me decade" (not by any means only among the young) has been aimless sensualists filled with *ressentiment*. The rhetoric of hate has risen to new heights of respectability, as in the University of Pennsylvania student newspaper columnist who expressed his chagrin that the attempt on President Reagan's life did not succeed.

America has afforded no more bemusing spectacle in recent years than the utter unbridled ferocity with which groups like the Moral Majority are now excoriated by respectable people — clergy, editors, educators, politicians. Words like "fascist" are thrown around with abandon, and the claim is made (as by a dean at Stanford University) that the Moral Majority constitutes a more serious threat to American freedom than does Communism itself.

Whatever reservations one might have about the Moral Majority, there is no proportion between its actual faults and the hysterical way in which it is attacked. When the ominous warnings of Norman Lear, for example, have been stripped of their fevered rhetoric, nothing remains except Lear's anger at the fact that someone besides himself might influence the direction of mass communications.

The Moral Majority has now become a lightning rod for all the *ressentiment* generated by the cultural revolutions of the past twenty years, a function previously served mainly by the Catholic

Church. The hysteria it calls forth stems from the fact that, whatever its failings, it has chosen to remind people of moral realities they had defined out of existence, and it does so in a public and aggressive way that threatens to alter the shape of mass culture. No institution today so effectively touches those nerves which had supposedly been safely buried.

The moral revolution of recent times has been effected by playing on people's wishes to be rid of burdensome responsibilities. Like the *ressentiment* inherent in genuine religion, everyone — all parents, all spouses, all teachers and preachers — are potentially subject to this restiveness. When offered a respectable rationalization for repudiating those responsibilities, all will be tempted and many will succumb. This revolution has consolidated itself by implicating millions of individuals. Many people cannot conceive of turning back, because to do so would require the kind of unblinking look at themselves which the culture has taught them to avoid.

Scheler was probably wrong in thinking that criminals do not suffer *ressentiment*, because of their overt acts of hostility towards society. This is perhaps true in situations where criminality is frankly recognized as such, even by criminals. However, as part of the contemporary moral revolution criminality has been offered the means of endless self-justification — the criminal as victim, as social protestor, as revolutionary, as virtuoso of self-expression. Finally, if all else fails, criminality can be justified in *ressentiment's* classic manner — who are the law-abiding that they should condemn the criminal?; what are their own hidden vices? (Have you been mugged on the street? You probably cheat on your income tax.)

Ressentiment now affects not so much criminals themselves, although many have learned how to exploit it, as those respectable citizens who rationalize criminal behavior. (Thus it may be assumed that both Jack Henry Abbott and Norman Mailer share it, but Mailer a little more.) For to minds formed in the moral revolution of recent times, criminality cannot help but have a continuing fascination, not in the old-fashioned way of love of danger or interest in the bizarre, but in the sense that the criminal is perceived, however dimly, as the ultimate moral revolutionary, the

individual who has thrown off all restraints, who acknowledges no laws or taboos, who has murdered conscience. This is precisely the state to which lesser moral revolutionaries aspire. Thus they admire the criminal and seek as far as possible to protect him. Social toleration of criminality has the effect of drawing a very wide circle around all human behavior, within which less aggressive moral iconoclasts know they can live comfortably. Thus many generally law-abiding citizens, who may even be victims of criminal depredations, become apprehensive and even hysterical at demands for "law and order," because immediately they sense a challenge to their own fixed relaxed moral outlook. The criminal is a living symbol of the transvaluation of values, of evil as good (or at least as excusable) and of good (the authority of the law) as evil.

The modern moral revolution has not been solely negative, however. Half of the "playboy philosophy" was the denunciation of traditional sexual morality. The other half was Hefner's insistence, also repeated to the point of tedium, that devotees of the sexual revolution are better people — more caring, more compassionate, more humane than the "puritans." The moral iconoclasts march half the time under the banner of personal liberation, half the time under that of humanitarian concern for others.

Since humanitarian concern is now equated with involvement in fashionable causes, the claim is self-justifying. Never in the history of the world have there been so many movements claiming to work for mankind's betterment. Since genuine humanitarianism is always a rare commodity, it should be acknowledged and welcomed wherever it appears. However, here also Scheler showed himself remarkably perceptive.

For Scheler, in defending the authenticity of Christian love, argued that modern humanitarianism is itself a product of *ressentiment*, and feeds on it. "Love of others," and a concern for their well being, may be an alienating experience, based on self-hatred or an inability to live with oneself. Love for the weak and oppressed may stem from hatred of the strong. Mere altruism, in Scheler's view, reflects personal emptiness.

Altruism is also, paradoxically, selfish in Scheler's view. It rests not on principled convictions about the well being of others, which might lead sometimes to seemingly harsh actions undertaken on

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behalf of another's genuine welfare, but rather on feelings of empathy which are self-regarding. Stemming as it does from a rejection of any objective hierarchy of moral values, it finds a common humanity only in the lowest qualities of mankind. It is inherently materialistic and sensual.

Although the rejection of objective moral values is justified in the name of individual liberty, it instead issues in obedience to group opinion, which becomes the only reliable substitute. Scheler was among those noticing how the modern humanitarian's concern for "mankind" results in the ability to love only an abstraction, not individual people. He goes so far as to say that the concept of "mankind" is *ressentiment's* "trump card" in its war against God.

Quite presciently, Scheler argued that in such circumstances value can be based only on utility, and utility only on pleasure. Life itself can be justified only by its utility, as it is reduced to a mere biological reality.

Scheler's strictures do not, of course, apply to all self-proclaimed humanitarians. But it is crucial to any effort to recover a genuine moral sense in society to recognize the way in which idealistic rhetoric has been preempted by the enemies of morality itself. It is basic to *ressentiment's* strategy to proclaim its own moral superiority even as it systematically undertakes to destroy all fixed moral principles.

NOTES

1. See particularly *The Genealogy of Morals*, published along with *The Birth of Tragedy*, tr. Francis Golffing (Garden City, N.Y.; Doubleday, 1956).
2. *Ressentiment*, tr. William W. Holdheim, with an introduction by Lewis Coser (New York: Schocken Books, 1972). The original German edition was in 1912, expanded in 1915.
3. See Hitchcock, "Abortion and the Moral Revolution," *The Human Life Review*, Vol. V, no. 2, Spring 1979, pp. 5-15.

APPENDIX A

[The following note was sent us by Prof. Charles A. Akemann, of the Department of Mathematics, University of California (Santa Barbara). By his extrapolation, there are some 30,000 late-term abortions performed annually in the U.S.; as he notes, the true figure could be much higher. Given the rapidly-advancing ability of medical science to save the lives of babies born at 20 weeks or more of gestation (and in some cases, even before that point), it would seem that the great majority of these unborn babies are killed after they have achieved that point of "viability" at which even the U.S. Supreme Court expected that someone would have a compelling interest in protecting their lives. —Ed.]

Late Abortion Statistics

It comes as no surprise that more people oppose late abortions than early ones. Indeed, many people believe that late abortions are still illegal, or, where they are permitted, it is due to indifference on the part of the state legislature. Even when they are informed that late abortions are legal everywhere in the U.S. and are beyond the reach of any legislature, skeptics will still reply that abortions are rarely, if ever, performed after viability. While it is certainly true that a very small proportion of all abortions occur after 20 weeks gestation, it is also true that a very small proportion of the postnatal deaths in the U.S. are homicides, yet we properly give these considerable attention.

The word "late" needs a precise definition, but there is no common agreement on its meaning in this context. Since babies have been born at 20 weeks and have subsequently developed normally, it is not unreasonable to begin a table at 21 weeks and to let the reader decide from there.

The following table was constructed using data supplied by the U.S. Dept. of Health, Center for Disease Control, in Atlanta. However, only eight states (Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New York (*excluding* New York City), Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont) report abortions by single week of gestation. Since Chicago is the only large city included in this group of states, the simple extrapolation methods which I used to estimate the totals for the entire U.S. probably underestimate the actual figures. After all, a late abortion is a dangerous operation which is not socially acceptable in most circles. Big cities offer better facilities and greater anonymity. Further, the reported figures show unmistakable signs of underreporting of the gestational age. For example, the eight states reported hundreds of abortions after one week, i.e. prior to con-

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ception itself. (Gestation is measured from the last day of the last menstrual period.) The figures are for 1978, the latest available.

Gestational age in weeks from last day of menstrual period.	Actual abortions reported in the eight state group beyond this age.	Estimate of the total U.S. abortions beyond this age.
21	1144	9702
22	792	6717
23	479	4063
24	318	2697
25	223	1891
26	154	1306
27	118	1001
28	91	772
29	66	560
30	44	373
31	26	221
32	10	85
	3,465	29,388

APPENDIX B

[*What follows is a review of the book Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature, by Susan Griffin (published by Harper & Row). The reviewer is Irving Kristol, a well-known writer who is also editor of Public Interest, a distinguished quarterly journal. It first appeared in The New Republic (July 25, 1981), and is reprinted here with permission (© 1981 by The New Republic, Inc.).*]

The Feminist Attack on Smut

Irving Kristol

It was utterly predictable that freedom of pornographic speech and action would sooner or later come into conflict with the women's movement. Pornography, after all, has long been recognized to be a predominantly male fantasy involving the sadistic humiliation of women. The women's movement itself, however, did not foresee any such conflict. On the contrary: it assumed a perfectly natural congruence between "sexual liberation" and "women's liberation." Indeed, it was this assumption that differentiated what in the 1960s we came to call "women's lib" from the traditional "feminist" movement that is now at least a century and a half old. Whereas feminists demanded more equal treatment and respect for women, corresponding to the more equal status they were in fact achieving in modern society, the movement for women's liberation proposed to create a radically new human condition for both men and women. There was relatively little utopianism in the feminist movement, which was essentially meliorist and adaptive. Women's liberation, in contrast, was utopian in essence, and it was only because it managed to co-opt the feminist impulse that so many were confused as to its ultimate intentions. Today, the unraveling of the movements is well under way. Feminism survives as a sturdy and successful enterprise; women's liberation is enmeshed in intellectual and practical dilemmas.

One such dilemma is illustrated by the issue of pornography. For traditional feminism, this posed no problem at all. It believed pornography to be filthy, debasing, and a suitable object for censorship. But, then, this feminism did not believe in "sexual liberation" on a cosmic scale, only in sexual equality on a human scale. For the women's liberation movement, however, the question of pornography has become the occasion for disillusionment and anxious soul-searching. Witness the opening paragraphs of Susan Griffin's *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature*:

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One is used to thinking of pornography as part of a larger movement toward sexual liberation. In the idea of the pornographic image we imagine a revolution against silence. We imagine that eros will be set free first in the mind and then in the body by this revelation of a secret part of the human soul. And the pornographer comes to us, thus, through history, portrayed as not only a 'libertine,' a man who will brave injunctions and do as he would, but also a champion of political liberty. For within our ideas of freedom of speech we would include freedom of speech about the whole life of the body and the even darkest parts of the mind.

And yet, though in history the movement to restore eros to our idea of human nature and the movement for political liberation are parts of the same vision, we must now make a distinction between the libertine's idea of liberty, 'to do as one likes,' and a vision of human 'liberation.' In the name of political freedom, we would not argue for the censorship of pornography. For political freedom itself belongs to human liberation, and is a necessary part of it. But if we are to move toward human liberation, we must begin to see that pornography and the small idea of 'liberty' are opposed to that liberation.

These pages will argue that pornography is an expression not of human erotic feeling and desire, and not of a love of the life of the body, but of a fear of bodily knowledge, and a desire to silence eros. *This is a notion foreign to a mind trained in this culture.*

I have italicized that last sentence because it is so revealing — so very true and so very false at the same time. The key phrase is "in this culture." Ms. Griffin writes from within the world of the women's liberation movement and is under the impression that, in discovering the roots of pornography in sadism, the roots of sadism in a hatred of life, and a consequent antithesis between eros (the striving for a lost "wholeness" in life by an imperfect creature) and pornography (a lust for the "wholeness" of death), she has come up with a shocking insight. That the antithesis is familiar to just about every moral philosopher who ever lived is something she seems sadly unaware of. Her "culture" is so totally contemporary that one comes away with the impression that, for Ms. Griffin, "research" means consulting authors who have published works during the past two decades. Still, she is on to something and must be given credit for having both the ability and courage to think herself out of "her" culture, as regards this issue at least. Her polemic against pornography and its apologists (whether "liberal" or social-scientific) is shrewd, vigorous, and leaves little unsaid that needs to be said.

And there are many rhetorical passages that combine both eloquence and insight, even as they generate profound misunderstandings. For example:

All death in pornography is really only the death of the heart. Over and over again, that part of our beings which can feel both in body and mind is ritually murdered. We make a mistake, therefore, when we believe that pornography is simply fantasy, simply a record of sadistic events. For pornography exceeds the boundaries of both fantasy and record and becomes itself an act. Pornography *is* sadism. [Italics in the original.]

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But what is “that part of our beings which can feel both in body and mind,” and which is “ritually murdered” in pornography? Ms. Griffin specifies it as “the heart,” a weak term that evokes echoes of romantic sentimentality. How much more powerful her statement would have been if she had said “the soul”! But Ms. Griffin does not believe that human beings have anything that can be called a soul. In fact, she is convinced that the idea of humanity possessing a soul, as distinct from a “heart,” is itself the *fons et origo* of pornography.

Ms. Griffin remains very much a utopian romantic. She believes that the *libido dominandi* is created by culture and against nature, that humanity is “naturally” in an uncorrupted state, that flesh and spirit are “naturally” one, and that the existential contradictions of human experience are imposed on us by sick and wicked cultural traditions. The specific tradition at which she takes aim is Judeo-Christianity. “The metaphysics of Christianity and the metaphysics of pornography are the same,” she boldly declares, finding in the Bible the cultural roots of the Marquis de Sade. Much of her book is an autodidact’s brash exploration of cultural history that is occasionally very perceptive, more often painfully sophomoric.

There is an element of plausibility, if not exactly truth, in the notion that Judeo-Christianity (as well as Islam and the oriental religions, of course), insofar as it is based on the dualism of flesh and spirit, addresses itself to the same problem as does pornography. And it is also the case that some currents within this religious tradition — generally, if loosely, labeled “gnostic” — seek to transcend this dualism either by extreme asceticism or adventures in sexuality, both of which may feed the “pornographic imagination.” But mainstream religious thought, in every time and place, has always sought a reconciliation of flesh and spirit through such institutions as marriage and the family. (The reconciliation is never quite successful, but that’s life.) It will not do to take isolated sentences or passages from Scripture — as Ms. Griffin does — which tend to emphasize the body-spirit dichotomy, usually at the expense of body. Such “gnostic” accents are there (far more in Christianity than in Judaism) but subsequent commentaries and “interpretations,” constituting the authoritative tradition, always convert them into much more homely doctrine. Some original Christians may indeed have regarded woman as “the vessel of evil,” but their descendants ended up offering prayers to the Holy Mother.

So, while it might be fair to say that “the pornographic imagination” is in some ways analogous to, or isomorphic with, the “gnostic” impulse to be found in all religions above the primitive level, it is more accurate to say that, whereas religion regulates and composes this impulse, pornography vulgarizes it. What is “liberated” in pornography is the “morbid”

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lust to extinguish the human condition itself, and all the complexities of that condition with which culture and civilization and religion attempt to cope.

Nor does culture (above all, religion) achieve its goal simply by warring against nature and “repressing” it. Success, however partial, is only possible because nature itself collaborates in its subordination to culture. Shame and modesty are “natural” to the human species, and the domination of thanatos by eros is equally “natural.” This means that “culture” itself is “natural” for the species, as is the very impulse toward sociality. To say of anything that it is pornographic is to mark it as an aberration in sociobiology as well as in culture.

So Ms. Griffin’s polemic against pornography goes off the track precisely because, though she has learned much in recent years, she is still entrapped in that cultural current of the 1960s which took Norman O. Brown and Herbert Marcuse as serious philosophers, not merely as the gifted eccentrics they were. This entrapment is further highlighted by the fact that, after excoriating pornography in the most violent terms, she weakly concludes that censorship is no answer. Her cursory explanation is that censorship of pornography inevitably leads to political censorship and political repression.

That such a proposition is so widely proffered and so blandly accepted today reveals the degree to which we are still in thrall to remnants of the “liberation” culture of the 1960s. For only a moment’s thought is needed to establish its falsity. After all, we had local censorship of pornography in this country for over two centuries and, whatever bizarre verdicts may have been reached in specific cases, this censorship cannot be shown to have had the slightest impact on freedom of political discussion. Indeed, no such claim was ever made — not by dissident Marxists, Socialists, Communists, anarchists, or whatever. It was only when the utopian idea of “sexual liberation” was merged into an equally utopian idea of the political liberation of humanity from all the unfairness and “injustices” of life itself that pornography came to be viewed as a positive moral force, because it challenged the validity of our fundamental cultural beliefs. Ms. Griffin rejects this conclusion as to the meaning of pornography, but is still trying to remain loyal to the premises that implied exactly this meaning. The contradiction makes for an interesting and exasperating book.

APPENDIX C

[The following editorial was the second in a series of three printed in the Chicago Tribune, August 19-21, 1981, under the general title "Supreme Court under fire." It is reprinted here with permission (Copyrighted, 1981, Chicago Tribune).]

A case of self-inflicted wounds

The mystique of the Supreme Court — from its august quarters to the stately photographs of its members — has a powerful appeal to Americans. This small group of individuals is entrusted for life with the duty to stand for the lasting principles of the Constitution against the temporary impulses to abandon them.

This mystique is the main source of the Supreme Court's political strength, but it has eroded. And this leaves the court vulnerable to the dangerous recent efforts to reduce its authority.

Many forces have come together at this period in our history to reduce the unique stature of the court: It has become fashionable to debunk all myths, no matter how useful. We have learned to believe that no principle can be absolute, and this leads to a distrust of the very idea of principle. Our whole view of the world — through science, philosophy, the arts — has been darkened by ambiguity; certainty of knowledge about anything — let alone the meaning of the Constitution's enigmatic phrases — has become suspect.

But too often the Supreme Court's own behavior has played into the hands of the demystifiers. And the original decision overturning anti-abortion laws is a case in point.

The Tribune supported the court's abortion decision and continues to support the availability of legal abortions. But how the Supreme Court explains its decision and the precise way in which that decision is stated make all the difference in whether a controversial ruling will weaken the court. And in the abortion case, the Supreme Court couldn't have done this part of its work more ineptly.

Justice Harry Blackmun's majority opinion has many flaws, which have been thoroughly examined by legal scholars. But one of them stands out in its ill effect on the public's perception of whether the court is a special, principled institution.

Justice Blackmun wrote, in effect, that the Constitution's guarantee of privacy (which, by the way, is nowhere to be found explicitly in the Constitution) means that pregnancies in the first three months cannot be

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regulated at all, pregnancies in the second three months can be regulated just a little, and pregnancies in the last three months can be aborted only to protect the health — including that slippery notion, the mental health — of the mother.

Now this may very well be a suitable way for a piece of legislation to treat the question of abortion, but it is simply implausible that it can be inferred from the text of the Constitution. It is quite explicitly based on medical judgments made by Justice Blackmun, who has no special competence (or for that matter authority) to make them. And, since medical ideas change with every new discovery, these medical judgments cannot stand the test of time. In fact, already the law has had to face the gruesome business of what to do when an abortion leads to the delivery of a fetus which, with current medical technology, may be able to survive.

If the late Alexander Bickel was right that the court “should declare as law only such principles as will — in time, but in a rather immediate foreseeable future — gain general assent,” the justices should have been extremely careful in how they handled the abortion case. Instead, the court blundered ahead, deciding the issue in a way indistinguishable from the way a legislature would go about deciding it and failing to make any persuasive link between its judgment and the constitutional text.

The Supreme Court, after all, did not have to settle the entire abortion question in a single term of court. It did not have to preempt state legislatures entirely; it could have declared unconstitutional laws that flatly prohibited virtually all abortions and left it to legislatures to experiment with different approaches. It did not have to make abortion a constitutional right up through the very final stages of pregnancy when the distinction between a fetus and a baby is little more than a function of its location. The Supreme Court need not have settled one of the more difficult moral questions of our time in a single, thunderous stroke. Apparently it so lacked humility that it actually thought it could.

The abortion case, though one of the most controversial, is not an isolated example of the court's arrogant failure to reach its decisions in a principled fashion. It settled the difficult question of reverse racial discrimination by reaching for an expedient middle position that satisfies no principle; it should have avoided the issue entirely until the society was ready to accept the proposition that the principle of equality means that the law should be color-blind. It created a body of legislative reapportionment law that had the odd result of declaring unconstitutional state systems that mirrored the bicameral arrangement the Constitution itself established for Congress. And the repeating spectacle of the nine justices writing nine separate opinions on a point of constitutional interpretation cannot but add to the public disillusionment about whether the court is really dealing in principle at all. If the Constitution really says something

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worth enforcing, can all nine justices have sharply divergent opinions about what that something is?

As the mystique of the court declines, people begin to believe that the justices are not really interpreting the Constitution at all but rather deciding, like enlightened despots, what they think is best for all the rest of us. And if that is the only question, then the people are better judges than the justices.

Of course it is not the only question, and this is why the political weakness brought on by the Supreme Court's self-inflicted wounds is so very dangerous right now.

APPENDIX D

[What follows is taken from the text of an Australian Broadcasting Commission Television interview on April 6, 1981, from Adelaide (South Australia), during which Mr. Richard Morecroft moderated a discussion of the disclosure that an In vitro fertilization "team" had frozen embryonic human beings at Queen Victoria Hospital. The interviewees were Prof. Peter Singer, chairman of the Bioethics committee of Monash University medical school, and Dr. G. Kovacs, a member of the In vitro team of the hospital, which is associated with the school.]

Putting the Problem on Ice

MR. MORECROFT: It means in effect that human life has been created and is being held in deep storage. One of those embryos was actually being thawed and started to grow in the test tube. Those embryos, by the way, are from eggs produced from women on fertility drugs.

After the egg has been fertilized and frozen, they pose some intriguing questions: For instance, Who owns the embryos? Are they still part of the women who produced the eggs? How much say do those women have on what happens to them? Can they rightly be considered frozen babies? Can they legally be destroyed, or would that be murder?

Well, 12 months ago, all that was fanciful speculation . . . now it has actually happened, the reality. The plight of that bank of frozen human embryos at the Queen Victoria Hospital will be decided not by the medical team but an ethics committee which is a combination of religious, scientific, and social opinions. Professor Peter Singer has been one of those advisors, and Doctor Kovacs is a member of the fertilization team. Dr. Kovacs, what's the purpose of this bank of human life, and that's what it is, isn't it?

DR. KOVACS: Well, it came about when we started improving our methods of producing embryos after egg pickups and we were in situations sometimes where we had embryos that for technical reasons we could not replace back into the woman. Then we had a decision to make: Whether those embryos should be allowed to die or should they be stored frozen and maybe implanted in the woman in subsequent cycles to produce pregnancy.

MR. MORECROFT: So you are saying it happened by accident almost.

DR. KOVACS: Well, it was the two alternatives; Of having the embryos die or keeping them, and this is what we decided, on the latter.

MR. MORECROFT: What do you intend to do with them?

DR. KOVACS: Well, the plan is that if these embryos are shown to be healthy and viable after they are defrosted, they will probably be reimplanted into

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the same woman in a subsequent cycle with the end of producing pregnancy in that woman.

MR. MORECROFT: We have the possibility of very much more than that, don't you?

DR. KOVACS: I guess there are all sorts of theoretical possibilities.

MR. MORECROFT: Could we look at some of those possibilities? I mean you have the capability if another woman comes to you, a woman who has had no contact with the woman who produced those eggs . . . and the woman came to you and asked you to implant one of those embryos into her body, you would have to do it, wouldn't you?

DR. KOVACS: Well, I don't know. These are very difficult problems, and it is to solve such problems such as these, which are not medical problems, that the Bio-Ethics Committee was set up at Monash. These are problems that the committee is considering, and we are looking to them for some guidance as to what we can do and what we should do from the ethical point of view.

MR. MORECROFT: In other words, you've created this bank of human lives and you now have to decide what to do with it?

DR. KOVACS: Correct. That's why we are hoping for help from legal people, the philosophers such as Professor Singer, and also the theological people who are involved with that committee.

MR. MORECROFT: But, shouldn't that decision have been taken before you actually started this bank of human embryos?

DR. KOVACS: Well, it's a problem that has arisen as a by product of the project, and it wasn't one of those necessarily contemplated. It has been discussed by the committee, and at preliminary discussions in 1980, they thought it was reasonable for us to freeze these embryos, and considering the various aspects of frozen embryos and what we can do with them.

MR. MORECROFT: So the ethics committee gave you the go-ahead to establish this bank of frozen embryos?

DR. KOVACS: Well, we discussed the possibility of letting the embryos die, or preserving them, and it was felt that it was probably ethically correct to preserve them for the time being.

MR. MORECROFT: Who owns these embryos, Professor Singer? I mean, do they belong to the women who produced the eggs?

PROF. SINGER: If you're asking a legal question, I'm not sure that anyone knows, because the law hasn't dealt with this sort of case before. If you're asking an ethical question, I think it is really up to the hospital ethics committee to decide what is going to happen to them. Now, obviously, the wishes of the genetic parents would be highly relevant there, but if, for instance, the genetic parents were to come to the hospital and say, "Here is another woman quite unrelated to us who has offered us \$10,000 for the

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embryo which she wants implanted into herself because she can't produce an egg herself." I think it would be quite up to the hospital to say, "No, these eggs were produced with public resources, with hospital resources. If you don't want them back yourself, if you don't want them reimplanted in yourself, then it's up to the hospital to decide whether they ought to go to another woman, and if they should go to another woman, which woman has the greatest need." In other words, I don't think the hospital has to assume that the genetic parents have complete control over the eggs.

MR. MORECROFT: You both seem to be assuming that a woman has first right to consider these embryos to be her own. For instance, do you know the men who contributed the sperm that fertilized these eggs?

DR. KOVACS: Yes, in most cases, it's the husband.

MR. MORECROFT: In most cases, but not all?

DR. KOVACS: Not all. If we would be doing the fertilization outside the body in a couple where the husband is infertile, then we would have to use semen from a donor, the same as what we do for artificial insemination.

MR. MORECROFT: So, would you consult the men and the women who are involved in producing these embryos before you decided on what you'd do with them?

DR. KOVACS: No, basically the embryo is considered to be mainly from the woman because the donors who donate their sperm do so relinquishing all responsibility and all claim to their sperm the same as they do in artificial insemination.

MR. MORECROFT: So who do you consult then apart from your ethics committee: Would you consult the women and the men at all?

DR. KOVACS: The women certainly. You would certainly consult the couple who are paying to have the pregnancy.

MR. MORECROFT: So, you're virtually considering those embryos now as children of the people who produced them?

DR. KOVACS: No, not quite. They're not really children: they're potential embryos, and the chance of these embryos surviving are still pretty slim. We've never proven that in the human that defrosting these embryos and putting them back will produce conception although it has been done in cattle; so it is theoretically feasible, and also, even with fresh embryos which we put back, there is a disappointingly small number of them which implant and produce pregnancy, so it's far off being children in storage.

MR. MORECROFT: They're a lot more than "potential embryos," aren't they? I mean, they are now the beginning of human life.

DR. KOVACS: Right. I guess one could consider the same for sperm which we store in a sperm bank. They are potential life, but they have a very long way to go before they would be a lot that can survive outside.

MR. MORECROFT: Well, how far would they have to go?

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DR. KOVACS: Well, they would have to be defrosted, they would have to implant in the uterus and grow for a number of months.

MR. MORECROFT: How long specifically, I mean, when do you start considering that embryo a human life?

DR. KOVACS: That is a very difficult problem. This is what the ethics committee spent a lot of time discussing. Professor Singer might be able to enlighten us.

PROF. SINGER: Certainly. Well, we haven't finished that, and obviously it is not a sort of case in which one expert can lay down a decision for everyone. What the Monash Center for Bio-Ethics is doing is setting up a research project to look at these sorts of questions. When do you consider the embryo ought to be protected? Now, that relates to contentious issues in our community, for instance, those about abortion. If you think, and it is the legal situation in our society, that abortion is not murder, then you couldn't possibly think that disposing of one of these embryos is murder, because by comparison with an abortion at say 14 weeks of pregnancy, this is a much earlier form of life. It has the potential certainly to develop into a later fetus, and then into a child.

MR. MORECROFT: Is it the beginning of human life?

PROF. SINGER: It is the beginning of life immediately after conception.

MR. MORECROFT: If it is a successful conception, it is the beginning of human life.

PROF. SINGER: Yes indeed it is, but it is not a successful implantation even; so that if you don't think abortion is murder, you wouldn't think there is anything like murder to dispose of these. If on the other hand you did think that abortion is murder, and if you took on abortion the line that right from the time of conception it's murder, which not everyone does, because some people say the embryo has to actually implant before it should be considered murder, but if you do take the line that right from conception it's a human life, then you might take the view that it's something like murder to dispose of these embryos. I'm not sure you should take that view, but as I said, that's something we really need to think about more, and I think what this whole problem shows is that in many areas of medical technology, we've got new technologies which leave us with questions that we haven't really thought about the ethical answers to.

MR. MORECROFT: That's why I think a lot of people would be absolutely staggered that a medical team has produced a bank of living human embryos which are now in deep freeze before anyone has thought through clearly exactly what is going to happen to them.

PROF. SINGER: But, you see, what else was the medical team to do? I mean, the alternatives, given that you couldn't for technical reasons, as Dr. Kovacs has said, put them back into the woman where they came from

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immediately, the alternatives were: To dispose of them, say to flush them down the sink, or, to freeze them. Now given that, what the medical team did, literally and metaphorically, was to put the problem on ice.

MR. MORECROFT: They created life before they put the problem "on ice."

PROF. SINGER: Well, they had created life in order to allow these women to have children which I think generally would be agreed to be a good thing, and for the technical reasons there they were left with some embryos that couldn't go back; so either they dispose of them, or they freeze them, and it seems to me entirely the sensible thing to do was to freeze them because that gives us all time to think about the question, and now we're thinking about it very actively. Now the public is starting to think about it as stimulated by programs like this, and that means we will have time later on to decide what should happen to them: Should they go back into the woman? Should they go back into other women who want them? Or is it perhaps, after all, alright to dispose of them?

MR. MORECROFT: If the team disposes of them now, they're committing murder.

PROF. SINGER: They're certainly not committing murder. The worst you could say is that they're committing abortions, and abortions are not murder in our society, legally speaking.

MR. MORECROFT: Well, some people would argue with that.

PROF. SINGER: Some people think they're morally equivalent to murder, and some people might think that what they would be doing would be morally equivalent to murder.

DR. KOVACS: Could I make a comparison which everyone will be able to understand? In a woman who is using an intrauterine contraceptive device, the sperm and the egg quite often get together, and a potential embryo forms but it doesn't implant; so it doesn't become human life. No one seems to object to that or not many people seem to object to that, and maybe there isn't a great deal of difference between the egg and the sperm fertilizing and sitting and freezing, or sitting in the fallopian tube and not finding anyway to implant in the uterus.

MR. MORECROFT: I thank you both very much. As you can see, the moral and ethical problems in a discussion like this are enormous, and this is only part of the debate. Genetic engineering raises a whole new set of problems.

APPENDIX E

[*Roughly the first half of the following article appeared in the (now-defunct) Washington Star on May 5; we noted it then, and were pleasantly surprised when the author, who is a Washington attorney, sent us his full text. We think both parts make interesting reading, and so we reprint the whole original here, with the permission of the author.*]

Abortion a Moral Issue, Not Dogma

by W. Shepherdson Abell

Among some of the shibboleths which pass for truth in the abortion debate, there are two which deserve more careful analysis than they usually receive:

1. "*The pro-life movement is an attempt to force a set of religious values on society as a whole.*"

This statement (which suggests not only that the pro-life movement ought not to be allowed to succeed in its endeavors, but that it really ought not to be allowed to try), is a singularly misleading one. It equates "religious" with "moral," which I think is one of the fundamental confusions of modern life.

If the Catholic Church, as a discipline for its members, still forbade them to eat meat on Fridays, and if (with the fervent support of the fish industry) it successfully promoted legislation to forbid *everybody* from eating meat on Fridays, that would truly be an imposition of its *religious* views on society.

But abortion is a different case altogether. Anti-abortionists rest their case not on a dogmatic religious belief — witness the hundreds of thousands of members of different creeds in the movement — but on grounds of morality.

Some may argue that a restrictive policy on abortion may be justified, not on the grounds of morality — *i.e.*, that abortion is intrinsically "wrong" — but on the grounds of social policy. Under this view, whatever the merits of abortion as a "private choice," the performance of millions of abortions a year has a cumulative social impact so great that society must deal with it. But I prefer the straightforward position that we should legislate the rights and wrongs of this issue, just as we already do on countless others.

We have a tax system which supports, among other programs, welfare grants to the poor.

This system can be justified, I suppose, on the grounds of preventing

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crime and other social problems. But I think it was really adopted because our legislators felt that it was simply *wrong* for poor children to starve, and it was *right* to tax those who have more, in order to provide the bare essentials of life to those who have nothing. We could have left it to each individual to decide whether he would contribute to the poor; we did not.

The Federal government and virtually all the states have enacted laws barring discrimination against a wide range of groups. Again, there may be intangible social benefits from such policies, but I believe the strongest motivation for these laws was the belief of our legislators that it was simply *wrong* to deny a person an education or lodging or a job because of his skin color. And we do not let each white citizen make up his own mind whether he agrees; we force him to obey.

The list could go on and on, from statutes banning cruelty to animals to laws voiding “unconscionable” contracts. Each really amounts to an imposition of a standard of right and wrong on all the individuals in society; whether or not they happen to agree.

Support for many of these standards developed painfully, over a period of years. Their translation into law took place, not by means of a Gallup poll — few laws are made by referendum in this country — but by our traditional political process (which means the supporters of the policy pushing and pushing until the legislative body decided, yes, this particular principle *is* important enough to override the personal freedom of those who disagree).

But, it is argued, to justify overriding such a fundamental right as a woman’s right to privacy, there would have to be an overwhelming consensus in society that abortion is intolerable. There is no such consensus.

Intelligent men and women disagree on whether life begins at conception and on the point at which it should receive legal protection. Polls show that a majority of Americans favor liberalized abortion laws. In these circumstances, how can a determined minority force its views on the majority?

The answer is: in approximately the same way in which a determined minority had its way with certain civil rights legislation in the 1960’s, particularly the public accommodations law.

It is doubtful that, at the time that law was enacted, there was broad public support for such legislation. But the legislators believed that it was right, and they voted for it. For once, they lived up to Edmund Burke’s often quoted (but seldom followed) principle: “Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays it instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.”

I think it is a fact that few Americans would turn the clock back on public accommodations. And this fact illustrates the way in which a statute can actually *lead*, instead of following, public opinion. Law has an

educational as well as a coercive effect; it can help shape new standards of conduct as well as reflect existing ones.

I understand why some would earnestly hope that the efforts to gain support for an anti-abortion law or constitutional amendment would fail; but I do not understand the view that, because a consensus may not already exist, the pro-lifers *should not even be allowed to try to build one*.

And so, to recapitulate: the pro-life movement is indeed an effort to impose on all Americans a moral standard with which many may disagree. That, in a sense, is what much of the law is about. We *can* “legislate morality,” and we do it all the time.

Now, perhaps the movement will not be able to get its law or constitutional amendment enacted. But if it does, by using the political process ordained by the Founding Fathers, and surely only after extensive, informed debate, that result would run contrary neither to our constitutional system nor to sound political philosophy. In fact, it would be an affirmation of the American form of government.

2. *The anti-abortion movement is an example of the single-issue politics that tears at the fabric of our democracy.*

This is a myth for three reasons: because everyone engages in single-issue politics when the right issue arises; because single-issue politics, as a matter of history, has strengthened rather than weakened our democracy; and because the pro-life movement, if it is to be criticized at all on this point, is probably *insufficiently* “single-issue.”

The “single-issue” depends (as usual) on whose ox is being gored. Perhaps you recall this plank from the 1980 Democratic platform: “The Democratic Party shall withhold financial support and technical campaign assistance from candidates who do not support the ERA.” I suppose there are more extreme examples than that, but they don’t come to mind at this moment. In any event, it is not just the women’s movement, but all of us, who are willing to use a single issue as the litmus test — if that issue is important enough to us. Consider the hypothetical example of a candidate whose positions jibe, in every respect, with my own, and who has all the abilities to fill the office he seeks with the highest distinction. But suppose he has a single flaw: he honestly believes that blacks are inferior and should be treated as such, and he insists on saying so, and using racial slurs, at every opportunity. I could not vote for such a man, and I doubt that most people would. Now, is it really surprising that there are a lot of citizens who feel as strongly about what they see as the destruction of innocent human life as they do about racism?

I am not an historian, but I believe that a case can be made that single-issue politics has strengthened this nation over the centuries. The nation was convulsed by the issue of slavery and the single-mindedness of the Abolitionists. Prohibition, I concede, is not a happy example; but the

APPENDIX E

civil rights movement of the middle of this century is. The Vietnam War was brought to a close largely by the efforts of those who asked no other question of the candidate than where he stood on the war. I don't say that the end result was ideal in each case; but I do say that the existence of large groups — not majorities at first — who believed strongly in their position and were willing to put that above all other political considerations, was not, on balance, unhealthy for the Republic.

Nor is the single-mindedness of the pro-life movement unhealthy. We can do with a strong dose of single-issue, moralistic politics from time to time. I do not take that term to mean issues of self-interest, but issues of broad principle. An excess of principle, after all, has not been among the greatest problems of our society in recent years.

Lastly, I submit that the pro-life movement is — if anything — *insufficiently* "single-issue." For tactical reasons, it has allied itself with a variety of groups who oppose welfare, a Federal Department of Education, and (for all I know) fluoridation of water. I am not in a position to judge whether such alliances are either necessary or, in the long run, helpful. But I wish we could do without them, because they dilute the purity of the movement which the *New Republic* called "the only major pressure group on the political scene whose cause is not essentially self-interest."

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