

Robert Soblen, Irvin C. Scarbeck, and Miroslav Nacualec and Karel Hlasny.

The Congress of the United States has shown wisdom in creating machinery to investigate and expose the nature and scope of Communist subversion in the United States. Communist subversion, as we have said, seeks to twist U.S. policy in the direction of Communist designs. This is done by bringing one or more U. S. officials to make, wittingly or unwittingly, decisions that forward Soviet objectives. So much is obvious. It is less obvious that no governing group, no Administration, is ever eager to recognize that one of its trusted officials, even one not highly situated, has played into the Communists' hands. Its instinct for political self-preservation naturally disposes it to defend any suspected employee against such a charge even, as we know, when the adverse evidence is overwhelming. The Executive, in short, cannot be counted on to police itself in this regard, which means that either someone else polices it, or that it goes unpoliced. Under our form of government Congress has the power necessary for such work—has, indeed, broadly interpreted, a constitutional duty not only to oversee the execution of policy, but to inquire into the pressures that go into the formulation of policy—whether pressures by monopolists, or pressures by Communists. Many instances of Communist-titled decision making would never have come to light but for Congressional scrutiny of decisions and decision makers. And had they not come to light, officials sympathetic to Communism might, with impunity, have gone right on serving Soviet interests. Examples are legion: the one-sided advantages frequently given the Soviets in the Cultural Exchange Program; the sale of wheat to the USSR at bargain prices during the height of the 1961 Berlin crisis; the semi-official status of Owen Lattimore in Outer Mongolia during an intensive campaign, and his attempt, fortunately aborted, to rush recognition of that Soviet satellite. For a knowledge of this kind of thing, Congress relies mainly on the Committee, and will, predictably, continue to do so, since the Committee's function is bound to be more important as the pace of the Cold War is stepped up. "The show-down with the Communist world conspiracy is on," writes Eric Sevareid in the *New York Post* (July 9, 1961). "We have entered the final stage of the long struggle to determine if we can hold our world position short of a great war. We are in that stage because Khrushchev has decided we are. He will act accordingly, which will force us to act accordingly—if we can clear our heads."

Towards a Definition of "Conservatism"



(with George W. Carey)

The words "conservatism" and "conservative" are employed with respect to a wide variety of subject-matters, have taken on a rich variety of meanings, and pose problems of definition that have frequently given rise to heated controversy. Men have, for example, called themselves (or been called) conservative in religion, conservative in art, science, or even in a craft, conservative in a game or sport. Within each subject-matter, moreover, men have meant demonstrably different things by conservative; some have laid down rigorous definitions, and others definitions so vague as to be virtually useless. Some writers have insisted, in consequence, that conservatism and conservative have ceased to have any fixed meaning whatever, and should henceforth be used only "positivistically," that is, to denote movements or parties that in fact call themselves conservative; and other writers have demanded that the terms be abandoned altogether.¹

With this background, no useful purpose would be served by attempting here a new, rigid definition of conservatism or conservative. Rather, we shall seek (a) to articulate the basic human situation out of which the terms conservative and conservatism first arose; (b) to indicate, with reference to this basic human situation, the sources of the seemingly endless confusion and complexity concerning the meaning of conservatism; (c) to illustrate concretely how our approach helps answer certain recurrent and important questions concerning the past and present status of conservatism in the United

¹Governor Rockefeller writes: "We all know that, in any serious historical sense, these terms [liberal and conservative] have lost all meaning. The use of such artificial labels, in political debate, merely distorts the issue and confuses the citizen. It substitutes the slogan for thought, the false label for the serious goal." *The Future of Federalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 21. Governor Rockefeller undoubtedly has a point as regards the present confusion; but we hope to have shown that the terms in question remain indispensable.

States and Great Britain; and (d) to set forth certain conclusions which our survey seems to warrant for understanding the status of conservatism in the American and British contexts.

I

A society or community is marked by a series of complex interrelationships among individuals. At one level there is interaction *within* numerous sub-systems or groups within the society: we observe daily that individuals interact, either competitively or cooperatively, in any number of functional areas such as politics, sports, religion, arts, crafts, sciences, etc. At still another level, there is interaction *among* the groups within the society: for example, athletic teams compete with each other, political parties in a democratic system compete for votes in order to gain control of government, and various economic and social groups within the society engage in an endless process of struggle and cooperation with one another.

In this context, three phenomena necessarily present themselves: First, there arise practices, beliefs, ideas, standards of judgment or rules which to a large extent prescribe the permissible form of interaction among individuals and groups. The degree to which rules governing interaction are formally prescribed, of course, varies. In the conduct of a political campaign, for instance, there are relatively fewer written rules than, say, for competition between baseball teams. Nevertheless, there appears to be a universal need for rules and norms; without them there would be no patterns of expectation among individuals within the society, and without patterns of expectation both orderly competition and cooperation among individuals would be virtually impossible.

A second phenomenon that presents itself we may put as follows: certain norms, values, practices, rules, standards of judgment come, little by little, over a period of time, to be regarded as more or less "established," that is, to be accepted as a "heritage" from the past. Individuals, in most instances, through various agencies such as the family, church, school, learn and absorb the elements of the heritage as they grow up in society, without questioning or critically examining them.

Third, the heritage from the past, no matter how carefully guarded, reveals itself as subject to *change and innovation*. The change and

innovation may be unintended; that is, not consciously sought by any of the members of society or groups within society. A "technological" "advance" may have the unanticipated effect of rendering obsolete a series of prescriptions and may also necessitate the development of new rules, values and norms of behavior for the regulation of interaction between individuals and groups. Or changes may be the long-term cumulative result of what, at any given point in the past, were imperceptible modifications of existing rules or norms. In either case, the participants in the social situation cannot be said to have intended or willed such changes.

Of greater importance for our present purposes, however, is intentional or deliberate change. In any given society, there are individuals, either within a given group or acting as a group, who advocate changes and innovations in the heritage. So, too, there are those who resist or fight such changes. As this constitutes a recurrent phenomenon within society, terms or words develop to describe those who seek change and those who resist change. In the languages of modern Europe such words as "progressive," "liberal," "radical," or "moderist" denote the former and the words "conservatism" and "conservative" denote the latter. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that most current definitions of conservatism stress resistance to change as its most fundamental and prominent characteristic. However, as the subsequent section will indicate, the phenomena in question are too complex to be caught up in a single term, and we readily see why the term conservative has come to be the subject of controversy and confusion.

II

In order to clarify and better understand the varied uses of the word conservative, we must take into account at least the following difficulties:

1. Because the clash between the proponents and resisters of change and innovation is certain to occur in all manner of groups and activities, there emerge as a matter of course in any society numerous particular "conservatisms," each with as good a claim to the description as the next. Nor is that all: since in any grouping or activity different persons may resist different changes and innovations, or resist change and innovation because of attachment to different as-

pects of the heritage from the past, we must not be surprised to find more than one particular conservatism in one and the same grouping or activity. We can, therefore, see why the term conservative is used with great frequency, and other than univocally, in everyday discourse. Moreover, we should note that, as the terms can be legitimately used to describe resistance to change in any group, it often refers to controversies that have little significance for the entire society.

2. There is a *dynamic* dimension to most social relationships that further complicates our use of the word conservative. Change and innovation do occur, even if the resisters appear to have their way, so that as time passes the heritage from the past comes to include elements that are merely heritage from the *recent* past; and we perceive a further reason for the multiplication of particular conservatisms. For some individuals will accept the newly admitted elements, and proceed to resist any attempt to alter them in the name of further progress; others, yesterday's conservatives, may refuse to accept them and demand that they be eliminated (that is, that "we turn back the clock"). Both positions are, clearly conservative positions, but with the hitherto unnoticed complication that some of our "conservatives" now differ with progressives not as to whether there shall be change and innovation, but as to the direction it shall take.

3. Particular conservatisms are likely to multiply over still another set of issues, having to do with the question whether—and, if so, to what extent—conservatives see themselves as called upon to *develop* the "tradition" or "orthodoxy" they have received from their forebears, or, contrariwise, to hand it down to their descendants without modification or elaboration. Some demonstrably conservative utterances certainly treat tradition or orthodoxy as if its "goodness" were exclusively a matter of its "oldness," as if that which is ancient were good merely because it is ancient, and as if that which is new or "modern" were bad merely because it is new. Others tend to emphasize the "goodness" of their tradition or orthodoxy, point to its antiquity as merely attesting to that goodness and recognize, accordingly, an obligation to nurture it and cause it to "grow." Only the former, properly speaking, fall under those definitions of conservatism that equate it with opposition to change and innovation; the latter, far from simply resisting change and innovation, often become its most ardent proponents and, as intimated above, clash with

progressives over the direction in which modifications shall occur and the "principles" that are to govern them. Thus, we can speak of *static* conservatives and *developmental* conservatives.

4. Conservative resistance may in certain circumstances (for example, in a society or organization or activity that at an earlier moment has passed under more or less complete control by progressive changers and innovators), express itself in the desire to overthrow the *status quo* and the tradition or orthodoxy to which it points as its justification. The conservative may, that is to say, regard himself as the defender of a tradition or orthodoxy which, though it has been reduced to a mere remnant, he continues to insist upon as *the* tradition or *the* orthodoxy appropriate to that organization or activity.

5. The progressive in a given society, organization, or activity, as noted above, may achieve a complete triumph and, as appears to have happened in Russia in the years following 1917, may impose an entirely new set of institutions, practices, beliefs, standards of judgment, etc. Then, the new system having been consolidated, the progressives may themselves begin to play a conservative role, resisting proposals looking to change and innovation that come simultaneously from new progressives and from the former conservatives. We thus arrive at the theoretical possibility of a conservative political movement dedicated to, for example, the preservation of Communism.

We conclude: (a) The multiplicity of meanings caught up in the terms conservatism and conservative reflect genuine complexities in the historical phenomena to which the terms refer. (b) The terms may reasonably be applied to all the many forms that, as noted above, the struggle on behalf of a tradition or orthodoxy may take. And (c) the terms nevertheless continue to be useful in discourse, though only to the extent that we make clear, in any particular discussion, which of their many possible meanings we intend.²

²We feel there are distinct advantages to be derived from our approach to an understanding of conservatism. Clinton Rossiter in his *Conservatism in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956) finds it necessary to speak of four types of conservatism: "temperamental," "possessive," "practical," and "philosophical." Russell Kirk in *A Program for Conservatives* (Chicago: Henry Regnery and Co., 1954) writes of the "conservatism of desolation" and the "conservatism of mediocrity," both of which he feels are not "genuine" or "real" conservatisms. Our approach eliminates the need for such classifications and disputes. In our framework Rossiter's "possessive" conservative is one who resists changes in his environment that would lead to a diminution of his status, reputation, or power. The "conservatism of desolation," which Kirk speaks of, is one that resists changes that would result in further loss of "individualism." Both

III

With an understanding of the basic human situation which gave rise to such terms as conservative, progressive, liberal, and radical—and of the complexities involved in the use of these terms in a “going” social system—we are in a better position to comprehend and evaluate the nature and character of conservatism in the United States and Great Britain. We will in the following discussion confine our attention to the sphere of *politics*, which is the commonest referent of the terms conservatism and conservative.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that we need some reference point in assessing the nature and incidence of conservatism in the United States and England. That is, even though we confine ourselves to the general area of political conservatism, there are even here several conservatisms, each with its own orthodoxy or tradition that it seeks to preserve or advance. Consequently, our assessment of conservatism in these countries will vary, depending upon which particular conservatism we fix attention upon. We propose to take as our referent the conservatism of Edmund Burke since he is, by fairly common consent, regarded as the “father” of modern conservatism.

Burke's leading work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, was an attempt (a) to state the character, purposes, and predictable results of the French Revolution as a venture in deliberate change and innovation, (b) to isolate the major issues at stake between the Revolution and the traditional political and social order that, in Burke's view, must be maintained in England and salvaged in France, and (c) to articulate the underlying principles of that traditional political and social order. Here it must suffice to notice some of the major issues that book draws which, not merely in England and France but all over Europe and in the United States as well, seem to remain the great divide between conservatives and progressives throughout the ensuing decades, as follows:

1. The issue between the *principle of consent* in politics, according to which good law and good policy in the State are merely that to which the “people” agree, and the *principle of morality*, which Rossiter's and Kirk's formulations are, in any case, open to the objection that they are *temporary* and *local* in reference. That is, at any given time and place, such conservatisms may or may not be present. Thus these formulations are of limited utility for cross-cultural or historical studies of conservatism.

insists that a law or policy is to be judged good or bad according as it does or does not measure up to an objective “standard” (“It is with the greatest difficulty that I am able to separate policy from justice. Justice itself is the great standing policy of civil society, and any eminent departure from it . . . lies under the suspicion of being no policy at all”).² That between the *principle of equality*, which claims for each man an equal share in political power, and the *principle of hierarchy*, which would assign a greater share of political power to those who are most capable of providing wise and good government (“ . . . the will of the many,” Burke wrote, “and their interest, must often differ . . .”).³ That between the *doctrine of the “rights of man,”* according to which, as Burke understood it, all men have an “equal right” to “equal things,” which, in turn, may be precisely defined in “declarations” or “bills” of rights, and the *principle of convention*, according to which the rights of man are “incapable of definition,”⁴ “vary with times and circumstances,”⁵ and are determined, for each individual, by “the fundamental laws of [his] country, . . . whose merits are confirmed by the solid test of long experience. . . .” (“The restraints on men,” Burke wrote, “as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.”)⁶ That between the *democracy of the living*, which authorizes each generation in a nation's history to remake laws and institutions in accordance with its own preferences and beliefs, and the *democracy of the dead* (the phrase is not Burke's but G. K. Chesterton's), according to which laws and institutions are, as Burke held, “an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity. . . .”⁷ That between what we might call today the *principle of redistribution*, which would require the state, in the interest of “equality,” to prevent undue concentrations of wealth, and the *principle of property and inheritance*, under which the “power of

² Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), p. 180. We do not want to enter the growing controversy concerning the status of natural law in Burke's philosophy. On this point see: Peter Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958) and Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 294-323.

³ Burke, *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

perpetuating our property in our families is . . . that which tends the most to the perpetuation of society itself"¹⁰ (. . . we [in England] have never dreamt," wrote Burke, "that parliaments had any right whatever to violate property, [or] to overrule prescription. . ."¹¹). And again: "The characteristic essence of property . . . is to be *unequal*. The great masses [of property] . . . must be put out of the possibility of danger."¹² 6. That between *atheism*, which Burke identified with what we have come to call "relativism" or "skepticism" (the French Revolutionaries, he wrote, "tolerate all opinions" because they "think [no opinion] to be of estimation"¹³), and "*true religion*." ("All persons possessing any portion of power," Burke held, "ought [to understand] that they act in trust, and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great Master, Author, and Founder of society."¹⁴)

Certain characteristics of Burkean conservatism merit special attention in light of our previous discussion. Burke certainly regarded the principles he was enunciating as a "heritage from the past," which no single generation of the British people was entitled to modify or set aside. But, we must be careful to note, Burke was a *developmental*, not a *static*, conservative. That is, he fought valiantly against his conservative contemporaries who wished merely to preserve the heritage rather than, as he put it, "preserve and improve" it in the interest of an expanding justice and ever-greater well-being for the country as a whole. Thus it was not at all inconsistent for Burke to support the American colonists against London, since they were

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106. This statement of Burkean principles differs in important particulars from the statements of other commentators. See, for example, Chapter Two of Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* (Chicago: Henry Regnery and Co., 1953). In our view, Burke's principle of the "peccant part" merely places a question mark beside the right of any generation of a nation's citizens to set aside the prescriptions of the past; in the very nature of the case, it ends up asserting that each generation must make the relevant decision for itself. Moreover, we do not equate the principle of hierarchy with inequalities based solely on birth. Rather, we feel, the principle is best interpreted as justifying inequalities among individuals on various grounds consistent with the principle of morality.

In constructing our statement of Burkean principles we have been careful to focus attention on those areas where Burke, himself, perceived the greatest threats to the tradition. In so doing, we are guarding against the charge that we have merely abstracted from Burke's theory those principles that fit *our* conception of "true or "genuine" conservatism.

seeking to overthrow a *status quo* that drastically departed from the tradition to which they had been accustomed as Englishmen. Or, to take another example, in the famous trial of Warren Hastings, Burke supported principles of colonial administration that many regarded as not merely novel but revolutionary. To understand this, however, we must recall that the controversy did not revolve around the issue of change itself but, rather, the direction of change. Here also Burke was seeking change in existing policies in order to advance those enduring principles that he deemed to be the *true* "heritage of the past."

The major controversies surrounding Burke and his relevance to contemporary English politics stem from the developmental character of his conservatism. Certainly, there is always room for controversy about what constitutes, in any given historical context, an "improvement" on the heritage of the past. In an important sense, Burke himself seems to have opened the door to the long series of "concessions" by which British conservatism has, now by espousing the cause of reform itself, now by accepting reforms forced upon it by political opponents, moved to a position in present-day politics that, according to some observers, is difficult to distinguish from that of its major opponent, the British Labor Party. Some progressive historians have, indeed, claimed Burke as their very own, denying that he was a conservative at all.¹⁵

Consequently, in assessing the current status of conservatism in Great Britain, certain questions arise: Did Burke draw the lines, in a manner valid for the entire subsequent period, marking the position that British conservatives have in fact defended against the forces of modernism? Or, have British conservatives yielded principled position after principled position in order to "go along with the times," so that Burke's issues are no longer real issues between conservatives and their opponents? As Section II (above) indicates, our answers to these questions will depend on what elements of Burke's heritage we take into our purview. If, for example, we concentrate solely upon organized British conservatism, i.e., British conservatism as represented by the Conservative Party, and the specific matters of policy on which it appears to have moved furthest from Burke, we should probably conclude that conservatives have moved sharply in the

¹⁵For an excellent survey of these progressive claims see Peter Stanlis, "The Basis of Burke's Political Conservatism," *5 Modern Age* 263 (Summer, 1961).

direction of both "Tory Democracy" and "Tory Socialism." The Conservative Party under Disraeli and his successors has not only accepted but often led the way in reforms, especially extensions of the suffrage, calculated to broaden the base of, and intensify, popular control over government, and in yet other reforms calculated to mitigate the alleged abuses of unrestricted private capitalism, to redistribute wealth and income, and to provide "social services" for the masses of the British people.

On the other hand, we are likely to come to a markedly different answer if we focus our attention on the resistance of British society to the major trends associated with the French Revolution. That is, if we use *all* of Burke's principles in our assessment, we should probably conclude that Burke's principles are not only relevant but continue to be accepted as genuine prescriptions by the bulk of English society. For example, millions of Britons still cling to Burke's views on an established church, on the religious basis of society, on the hereditary and prescriptive character of the British constitution, including the British monarchy, on the rights of man, and most crucially, perhaps, on what we have called above the "principle of morality," according to which there are objective standards of right and wrong in politics to which electoral majorities, no less than kings and magnates, must subordinate their wishes and appetites.¹⁶ We might well conclude, using Burke's entire range of principles, that those matters that lay closest to Burke's heart have in large part been prevented, up to now in Britain, from entering the sphere of political controversy at all.¹⁷ And even in those areas where the Conservative

¹⁶For confirmation of this point note the reaction of the British public to the Profumo scandal. There is room for intelligent speculation about whether the French public reaction would have been nearly so sharp under similar circumstances.

¹⁷In this connection, we must be careful to distinguish between the arena of actual political controversy and the logomachies of savants and *littérateurs*. If one focuses his attention on the relevant literature he will find that not only have Burkean principles been the subject of debate but that they have, to a large extent, been rejected. Thus Russell Kirk can write: "By and large, radical thinkers have won the day. For a century and a half, conservatives have yielded ground in a manner which, except for occasionally successful rear-guard actions, must be described as a rout." See Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, p. 4. This may be and probably is a valid judgment, if taken as merely literary history; it is an absurd exaggeration if intended as a judgment about modern politics.

Such gaps between the fortunes of what let us call "literary conservatism" and conservatism as actually given in political reality are not uncommon. Samuel Stouffer's *Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1955) shows very clearly that conservative (that is, anti-liberal) attitudes toward freedom of

Party's concessions appear to have been the greatest, namely, those relating to economic measures of a redistributive or "welfarist" character (inheritance taxes, use of the income tax for the purpose of bringing about ever-greater economic equality, nationalization of industry, the complete abandonment of private capitalism, etc.), Britain remains divided between those who would subject the whole of British life to the egalitarian and modernist principles against which Burke inveighed, and those who, in the name of traditional principles, continue to resist, and by no means always unsuccessfully.

If anything, the nature and status of American conservatism is even more complex and controversial. There is, of course, the crucial question of whether the principles of Burkean conservatism are applicable to, or appropriate for, the American context. On this point some have insisted that American institutions, environment, traditions, development, and problems have been so dissimilar from those of England that Burke's principles are of limited utility for identifying legitimate American conservatives.¹⁸ Yet there are peculiarities in the American tradition which make it virtually impossible to discover a comprehensive, systematic, and indigenous conservative theory which would serve this function. First, the United States has produced few systematic political philosophers, so that it is hardly surprising that there has been no American counterpart of Burke.¹⁹ As a consequence, there has not been, in the American tradition, any systematic articulation of generally recognized conservative principles that apply specifically to the American context. Part of the reason for this may be that rapid social and economic change were characteristic of the American experience from the very beginning and, along with them, general acceptance of rapid social and economic change as necessary and desirable. At no time, therefore, up

speech have, out in the general population of the United States, suffered no such eclipse as that which has overtaken them in the groves of Academe (where visibility is notably lower).

¹⁸Writes Clinton Rossiter: "... American conservatism must be judged by American standards, the standards of a country that has been big, new, diversified, successful, and non-feudal, a country in which Liberalism has been the common faith and middle-class democracy the common practice." *Op. cit.*, p. 129. We should note, however, that the United States has not declared its independence from Western Civilization, whose traditions and principles are presumably still relevant to a final judgment on American conservatism.

¹⁹For an imaginative discussion of possible reasons for this lack of systematic and comprehensive theory, see Daniel Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953).

to a recent date at least, has there been in America an "old order," with more or less settled "tradition," that men have thought of themselves as called upon to preserve, or even to "preserve and improve," or that other men, in any significant numbers, have been determined to "reform" or "destroy." To a great extent, Americans appear to have moved over the decades to their present political, economic, and social arrangements with tacit agreement on all sides that everything, including the American "tradition," must grow and develop, and that no one possesses a reliable model of the most desirable outcome of American growth and development.

Second, issues have arisen, to be sure, and have been fought out and decided, but they have tended to be narrow (that is, to concern this or that small part of the political or economic system) and ephemeral (as with the controversy over the Bank at the time of Andrew Jackson, and that over "Free Silver" in the 1890's); more often than not, both "sides" have thought of themselves as defending the "tradition" (the definition of which, accordingly, has itself often been a topic of controversy); and the usual result, even in so bitter a struggle as that over slavery, has been that the institution or policy favored by the victors on a given issue has been at once absorbed into and made a part of the "tradition."

Third, while it is true that there is what can be considered an American tradition (namely that which is embodied in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the *Federalist*), there has been and is wide-spread disagreement about what this tradition actually means. Further, there is debate as to whether the principles contained in this heritage are to be interpreted in a "static" or "developmental" manner. In the Civil War, for example, the Southerners no doubt felt that they were waging a conservative battle against both a revolutionary interpretation of the Constitution and the "All men are created equal" clause of the Declaration of Independence. Yet, Lincoln has gained increasing recognition, in some quarters, as the leading conservative statesman and political thinker of nineteenth century America, on the grounds that he truly interpreted and advanced the heritage bequeathed to us by the Founding Fathers. In a similar vein, contemporary debates concerning the First Amendment and how its provisions are to be interpreted, are marked, on both sides, by appeals to the intention and purposes of its authors. In the absence of norms, standards or principles which are, on all

sides, generally accepted as the heritage from the past, there is, in America, unavoidably, endless controversy surrounding the efforts to distinguish conservatives from progressives. Even more, in the absence of generally-recognized standards by which to identify conservatism and progressivism, it is always difficult in America to say where significant clashes have taken place, and are taking place, between the two camps. For these reasons, no doubt, many have found it both necessary and profitable to try to apply the Burkean principles to the American context. And, if we approach the American phenomena in terms of the political issues that have become sharp in recent decades, using Burkean conservatism as our criteria, the following issues would seem to divide conservatives from progressives:

1. Conservative belief in a decision-making system with a division of powers and diffusion of authority, with intermediate institutions through which the popular will is refined and interpreted *versus* the progressives' desire to remake American institutions to conform with models of plebiscitary democracy in which the majority could rule directly and with a minimum of delay. The conservative, consistently with Burke's prescription, resists efforts intended to advance a conception of political equality that would give to a majority, through periodic elections, the power to make substantive policy decisions. Hence the conservative opposes progressive reforms, such as a "responsible" and "disciplined" two party system, that would have the effect of centralizing authority and eliminating separation of powers and the elaborate checks and balances provided by the Framers. Still more, the conservative favors those devices in the present system that check and divide the power of the national majority, such as federalism, a bicameral legislature, equal representation of the States in the Senate and, among others, the existing procedure for amending the Constitution. Thus, by this standard we may speak of the authors of *The Federalist* as conservatives not only because they set forth and explicated the norms that modern conservatives defend against progressive attack, but also because their beliefs are much more closely akin to those of Burke than to those articulated in the French Revolution.

2. The issue raised by conservative resistance to egalitarianism, that is, the use of the power of government for the redistribution of income, for the "equalization" of "opportunity," and for the provi-

sion of "social services" calculated to benefit the poor at (so conservatives allege) the "expense" of the well-to-do. On this issue the conservatives include the few American voices out of the past, Alexander Hamilton's especially, who have spoken out boldly in favor of "natural aristocracy," unequal wealth, and unequal privilege, together with, more recently, those of opponents of such measures as the progressive income-tax, inheritance taxes intended to prevent the perpetuation of large concentrations of wealth, minimum wage laws, social security, etc.

3. The issue posed by conservative attachment to the "rights of property," which has gradually transformed itself, over the decades, into that of the status of "free enterprise," or "capitalism"; and the American conservatives now become those, especially certain justices of the United States Supreme Court and certain Senators and Representatives, who have resisted the trend toward government intervention in the economic order.

On these issues there have always been American conservatives who have stayed quite close to Burkean conservatism, which, accordingly, has perhaps fared better in the United States than in Britain—a statement that takes on added force if we include within our purview certain other issues that have never yet entered the arena of political controversy in the United States, especially: (a) that of the prescriptive binding force of the first nine Amendments to the Constitution and, beyond those amendments, of a "higher law" upon legislative majorities; and (b) that of the propriety, despite current interpretations of the First Amendment, of a whole series of practices having to do with the status of religion in America (e.g., the references to the United States as a "Christian nation" in Presidential addresses, the exemption of churches and synagogues from property taxes, the maintenance of chaplains in the Armed Forces), where the prevailing American view seems to parallel Burke's sentiments concerning the "principle of morality," the religious basis of society, and the dangers of atheism.

One thing is certain: The French Revolution, as Burke understood it, has yet to occur in *either* Britain or the United States, though it has always had its proponents in both countries. In the decisive dimension, the "Burkeans," British and American, have had their way.

IV

From our discussion thus far, it is not difficult to see why controversy and confusion have surrounded discussions of conservatism in the United States and England. We may now add: because the *basic* division between conservatives and progressives turns upon issues concerning political, economic, and social equality, both in the United States and in Great Britain, acknowledged conservatives of the Burkean school are joined by others, distinctly non-Burkeans, in resisting movements or policies which would lead to greater equality. One can, as we noted in Section II (above), correctly classify these non-Burkean resisters as conservatives, at least on this issue. But, if and when other issues, such as, for example, the religious practices and policies of the society or the government arise in public debate, these same non-Burkeans do *not* align themselves with the Burkean conservatives. Thus, from issue to issue, we can expect shifting alliances of conservatives. This process in itself causes confusion, for individuals who on one set of issues are seemingly united in their resistance to change or in their attempt to reestablish past practices, will divide into various "camps" when still another set of issues arises. As a consequence, trying to formulate in theoretical terms a "common denominator" among those who have been united at any one time in resistance to change is a complex, if not impossible, task.

Clearly, as we have emphasized in our brief survey, a systematic analysis of conservatism is not possible unless there is some referent which constitutes a standard to which existing "conservative" policies can be compared. As our discussion in Section II (above) shows, any number of standards could legitimately be used for this purpose, and this in itself becomes a further source of controversy and confusion. Such a standard, as we have indicated, will be related in some way to the processes and direction of change within a society. Yet we feel there are certain distinct advantages in using Burke's principles as a standard. They are, for one thing, the most comprehensive and encompassing. That is, they identify a wide range of issues that have, in fact, at different times, produced conflict between acknowledged progressives and conservatives within the American and British societies. More than this, the Burkean principles are capable of "encompassing" less comprehensive conservatisms that have fought the

forces of progressivism on a more limited basis. And when the principles of Burkean conservatism are used to distinguish conservatives from progressives, the results are generally in accord with commonly-held opinions. As we noted in speaking of American history, for example, the Federalists, when we use Burke's principles as our measure, fall into the conservative camp, a classification which will hardly surprise anyone but does illustrate the applicability of Burkean principles to the American context. If we add to these considerations, (a) the fact of the growing recognition, in recent scholarship, that modern conservatism somehow echoes Burke, in both the United States and England, and (b) the fact that there is no American theorist who approaches Burke in comprehensiveness and who might therefore be a suitable substitute for Burke in analyzing conservatism in the American context, the case for using Burkean principles as our standard becomes even stronger.

Even using the Burkean principles set forth in Section III (above), there are still problems. First, as we have indicated, Burke was a developmental conservative and hence we can expect controversy even among Burke's followers about what movements, reforms, or theories do or do not serve to advance and promote these principles at any given time or place. Secondly, analysts have reason to differ about whether all these principles are of equal importance, or whether some should be more highly cherished than others; and the resulting judgments will, clearly, affect the estimates of different judges as to the status of conservatism in the United States and England. If, for example, one places the issue of egalitarianism before all others, one will, no doubt, at least in the English context, see a decline in conservative belief and influence.

We should note, finally, that Burke's principles provide only in "strategic" terms the basis of conflict between American conservatives and progressives. Contemporary American debates about majority rule and political equality, for instance, often center on such questions as the nature of federalism, proper Executive-Congressional relations, the role and function of the Supreme Court, and the organization of political parties. While on these issues many conservatives base their positions on Burke's prescriptions, the subsequent debate, in large part, is conducted in distinctly non-Burkean terms. Burke's principles, then, serve only the function of determining the position his adherents will take toward specific proposals.

For these reasons, even if Burke's conservatism does become a more generally acknowledged and accepted standard, we hardly anticipate controversy about the past and present status of conservatism in the United States and England to abate. However, we may indulge the hope that the areas of disagreement will be more sharply defined, and that the debate will be conducted with increasing clarity and precision.