Chapter 6

1954–1959

"Why Are You So Damn Logical?"

On November 19, 1955, the premier issue of *National Review* hit U.S. newsstands. Unsurprisingly—with senior editor Willmoore Kendall's name on the front cover—the magazine immediately went on to the attack against liberals. Its editors asserted that "the nation's opinion-makers for the most part share the Liberal point of view, try indefatigably to inculcate it in their readers' minds, and to that end employ the techniques of propaganda." Therefore, "we may properly speak," they continued, of "a huge *propaganda machine*, engaged in a major, sustained assault upon the sanity, and upon the prudence and the morality of the American people." Liberals had set themselves in opposition to "the goals and values appropriate to the American tradition." Moreover, the sanity of liberals themselves was suspect, proclaimed the editors, "because the political reality of which they speak is a dream world that nowhere exists."[1]

Liberal intellectuals responded by heaping scorn on the infant magazine. A negative comeback from social critic Dwight Macdonald was predictable. But the nastiness of his attacks—labeling *National Review*'s staff "Scrambled Eggheads of the Right"—was startling. James Burnham was a traitor to Trotsky with clichéd ideas, Suzanne La Follette an angry incompetent, and Willi Schlamm a "lowbrow" mediocrity. Kendall, said Macdonald, was "a wild Yale don of extreme, eccentric, and very abstract views who can get a discussion into the shouting stage faster than anyone I have ever known." An unkinder cut for Kendall came from old classmate John Fischer, then editor of *Harper's*. Over lunch Kendall had solicited him to write a piece about the new magazine. In "Why is the Conservative Voice so Hoarse?," Fischer, in his column "From the Editor's Easy Chair," linked *National Review* with other "extremist little magazines." The new publication, he wrote, "aimed primarily at an audience of True Believers . . . who throw themselves

frantically into a cause—often to make up for some kind of frustration their private lives."[2]

Harder yet for Kendall and his fellow editors to swallow was disapprov from fellow conservatives bothered by the magazine's take-no-prisone style. Kendall had a hard time attracting fellow academics to write for t magazine. His only real success in this regard was in getting Revilo Oliv then an obscure classicist at the University of Illinois, to write the occasion article. Eric Voegelin thought Kendall was wasting his time "mangling" le wingers. R. B. McCallum, Kendall's old tutor, saw *National Review* as inte perate. He gently suggested that instead of calling Franklin Roosevelt "worst ever" president it might have focused a specific failure such as getti "duped" at Yalta. Though often wooed by Buckley and Kendall, Bertra de Jouvenel, prominent French conservative and Willmoore's close frie refused to write for the magazine because it supported McCarthy. The to of *National Review*, he said, was inappropriate for how "Christians sho fight their battles." Even Charles Hyneman criticized the new magazine so severely "slamming the liberals."[3]

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rebrand themselves as progressives. Kendall (and the other editors) rejected the view that liberals were engaged in a general conspiracy with communists. Rather the "conviction" at *National Review* was that liberalism posed a serious independent danger to the nation and that the magazine should focus on fighting it. From 1955 to 1958, in his weekly column "The Liberal Line," Kendall analyzed, dissected, and lambasted the "liberal propaganda machine." In this role it was he who launched the campaign to make "liberal" a dirty word, serving as the tip of the conservative spear.[5]

As an experienced propagandist, Kendall recognized the "wheel-spinning operation" of the American left. He set out to craft counternarratives to it. "The Liberal Line" involved a long-running, partly tongue-in-cheek propaganda metaphor. Liberal "operatives" and "echelons" received "directives" from a vaguely defined "central headquarters." Kendall named, and tried to shame, "leading opinion-makers" he believed were misleading the public. Favorite targets included Joseph Alsop, Stewart Alsop, and Walter Lippmann in journalism and Chester Bowles, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and John Foster Dulles in academia and government. The column suggested that such men—however they designated themselves politically—were liberals who supported large-scale government spending (except for the military), minimized the threat of global communism, and sought to control both parties. In 1955, for example, Kendall claimed liberals wanted "Republicans to nominate, as usual, an anti-Republican Republican," that Bowles sought to defeat "the world Communist movement without firing a shot or mussing a shirt-cuff," and that writer Lewis Mumford advocated neo-communist economics to stave off actual communist economics. Sociologist Norman Birnbaum, Kendall claimed in 1959, "does *not* say that Western democracy is no more democratic than you know what, but he's thinking it mighty loud."[6]

Columnist Kendall loved pointing out the "smugness" and "humorless confidence" of liberal leaders sure of a supper, sure of an easy chair, and sure of the truth. Liberals, he said, viewed discussion as "a one-way transmission belt for their superior wisdom and values." They constituted a "mutual admiration society" which considered itself "infallible" and suppressed alternate views. Never questioning their own righteousness, they patted "one another's backs." Kendall said John Fischer had made "intentionally inaccurate" claims about "heavy clerical overtones" at *National Review*. He then added that liberals tolerated such lies because they "ought to be true." When Lippmann engaged in an "examination of conscience" about China, he did not look into "his own conscience, but rather that of Chiang Kai-shek." Cocksure left-wing journalists were quick to dismiss the "crass ignorance" of well-trained American military leaders. Instead they looked for guidance from the great strategic minds at work "writing columns for newspapers." Regarding the paramount issue of the day—the struggle against communism—liberals

ignored advice contrary to their own pacifistic predilections and embraced a "fatalistic defeatism." In damning the book *Conscience*, Kendall ridiculed author Robert Burlingame's overactive sense of guilt. Equating "the American conscience with his own," the author combined superficial generalities, such as "war never solves problems," with naïve faith in a new morality.[7]

Kendall could produce solid work as a reporter for the magazine, especially when covering geographical regions he knew well. In September 1956, for example, he traveled to Bolivia to write a firsthand account of that country's left-wing regime. Once in the country he described power shortages, large-scale corruption, food lines, and galloping inflation. He ascribed these faults to the unwise nationalization policies of the Bolivian government. The ruling National Revolutionary Movement (MNR), he wrote, was motivated by anti-American animus which caused it to make "mad" decisions like nationalizing its tin mines. The MNR was the de facto "jailer of Bolivia's workers and peasants." Yet only massive American financial and technical aid kept its abominable regime afloat. The real failure of the country's former mine owners, Kendall said, had not been paying their workers poorly. Rather they had failed to subsidize churches and schools to combat pernicious communist ideas. Kendall then denounced "idiotic" American policies which decoupled financial grants from whether a recipient country observed decent "standards of public morality."[8]

The next year Kendall combined his expertise at book reviews with some firsthand reporting on Spain. This episode started out with an assessment of Herbert L. Matthews's book on the Spanish Civil War, *The Yoke and the Arrows*. Matthews had reported on the war for the *New York Times*, and Kendall had known him in Madrid. By minimizing communist influence among the Loyalists and excusing church burnings, Kendall said, Matthews revealed a deep liberal bias. The author was determined to portray the Nationalists as "children of darkness" and the Republicans as "children of light." Kendall concluded his review by proclaiming that he was not "disappointed" in the author because "he had never thought much of him anyhow." The Spanish government was paying attention. It contacted Kendall to undermine a controversial assertion in *The Yoke and the Arrows* that a celebrated incident in the 1936 siege of the Alcázar fortress in Toledo had never happened. When the Republicans threatened to kill his hostage son if he did not surrender, the usual story went, the Nationalist commander told his son to commend his soul to God, shout long live Spain, and die as a patriot. Upon the commander's refusal to surrender, the Loyalists shot their hostage. Complete fiction, wrote Matthews. With primary documents and eyewitness testimony provided by Spain, Kendall published a follow-up piece in *National Review* which affirmed the original story.[9]

As a journalist Kendall could be discerning about liberal trends. In 1956, for example, he discovered a "position that the machine has been at pains to take out," namely that Eisenhower had allowed the Soviets to surge ahead of the United States in its nuclear capabilities. So important was this new initiative, headquarters farmed it out "to top-echelon machine operatives of unimpeachable respectability; namely, the Alsops." Kendall recognized this theme of supposed American military weakness as a way to get "Republicans out of power." He then suggested the machine only adopted "positions" when it had "a firm lead from our colleagues in the upper reaches of the government service." It was not really in favor of a tough anti-Soviet stance, but wanted to counter charges "that might undermine [liberal] prestige." Currently, "because of certain highly placed officers in the armed forces," the machine lacked the "free hand" on military questions that it enjoyed elsewhere. Years in advance, then, Kendall perceived the false "missile gap" narrative which Democrats, encouraged by Joseph Alsop, used in 1960 to put John F. Kennedy in the White House. In November 1957 Kendall saw even further into the future of liberalism when he suggested that the American left had come to treasure equality above all other values. Hence, he decided to expose its ultimate plan, which he called "Operation Blurring-of-Distinctions." Its purpose was

> to rear up a breed of human being that looks out on its world and sees not men and women, whites and Negroes, aristocrats and plebeians, saints and sinners, etc. but indistinguishable units bearing identical rights (to equality of opportunity, to a job, to a high standard of living, to security, to die peacefully in bed rather than get killed in a war)—all without interesting distinctions among them except, of course, that between rulers (that is, bureaucrats of various ranks) and ruled (that is, people who obey bureaucrats of various ranks).

Liberals would never give up this quest for equality until "the last molehill of privilege shall be steamrollered level with the plain." Few people in the 1950s could foresee the rise of gender fluidity as part of the liberal agenda, but Kendall did grasp this tendency.[10]

The editors of *National Review* valued good writing and wanted to maintain a high level of intellectual discourse. But issues of writing style eventually came to affect Kendall's position at the magazine. For *National Review* to achieve popularity, Buckley knew he had to rid its pages of overly scholarly elements, sometimes linked to Kendall and friends. In 1956, for example, Revilo Oliver criticized the magazine for lacking "intellectual finish and stylistic polish." He said it was "too journalistic" and focused too much on fleeting issues of the day. From the beginning, however, the magazine's editors—particularly James Burnham—wanted to reach a large audience

in order to affect public affairs. Buckley had developed a friendship with Oliver in the mid-1950s but quickly decided that the Illinois professor was "dead wrong." To survive *National Review* had to attract readers. Therefore, it had to become "more journalistic" and needed to keep focusing on contemporary events even if it lost a few highbrows. When the magazine began, Kendall had been in charge of the book review section. In 1956 the editors removed him from this position because he appeared "inattentive and given to academicism."[11]

At *National Review* Kendall sometimes tried to write in the desired popular vein. He would mix his sarcasm together with folksy Oklahoma idioms. Able to write chatty, accessible copy since his *Tulsa Tribune* days, he had sharpened his ability to appeal to the public working as a propagandist. Nevertheless, much of his work for the magazine proved challenging for readers. When Kendall wanted to say something important—something beyond mere propaganda—he slipped into the style pioneered in his Locke book, that is, careful textual analysis. To find the treasures lurking in Willmoore Kendall's best prose, then, readers had to put their brains to work. In his *National Review* articles, Kendall sometimes took several weeks, with continuations over several issues, to reach a thoroughly logical conclusion about a subject. "Readers of considerable education," conservative rhetorician Richard Weaver told Kendall, often found his elaborate "schematism" to be "a thing of beauty," but even they might find it "too rigorous." Such "relentless logical progression," Weaver went on, made "the average man uneasy." To appeal to a popular audience, he said, Kendall needed to write in a more "relaxed and 'natural' way." Long before, Kendall's father had told him that a journalist should avoid "logical syllogisms" in favor of sprightly accounts of "personal doings." At that time, Willmoore defended his style as adopted from his "great and good friend R.G. Collingwood." Decades later, for better or worse, Kendall had not purged his prose of Collingwood's influence, and, in the end, he never would.[12]

Willmoore had thrown himself into work at *National Review* in part to revive his sagging spirits. Now in his forties, he had begun to feel the effects of his age and "high living," and his marriage to Anne was breaking up in an ugly way. In August 1955 she moved out amid accusations of his drunkenness and philandering, and even domestic violence. Anne accusing Ken of throwing a knife at her during an argument. Attempts to reconcile proved futile. Willmoore claimed Anne "had built a wall around herself emotionally." He became distraught when she refused to forgive his misdeeds and saw him as "a liar, a cheat, and a scoundrel." Financial worries compounded these anxieties, with Willmoore thinking he might lose all his assets and face prosecution for unpaid debts. Then, shortly after Christmas in 1955, Kendall had "a profound religious experience," which, he said, would "make

a different man of me." Gerhart Niemeyer was present. He later described the moment "when Willmoore, hitherto atheist, had encountered God one morning on the road, and broke into tears that would not dry for days. I have always felt that that moment of deepest humility was also his moment of greatest glory that can never be expunged." Still hoping to salvage his marriage, he admitted causing most of its problems, saying he had gone "plain off his rocker" with financial worry. Unimpressed, Anne moved forward with the divorce. A new "miracle" occurred on New Year's Day 1956 which allowed Willmoore to sell some Virginia property for a good price. As he moved into his new house in Connecticut "to rattle around absurdly in its several square miles of floor space," he confessed that losing Anne caused him "a kind of pain I have never known." Receiving a bell as a gift from Yvona "clearly intended for the calling of the children we intended to have at Northford," he said, "was the most traumatic experience of Christmas day."[13]

The divorce became final in July 1956. Kendall's major remaining asset was the Northford property which he called "virtually useless to me without Anne." Though not much interested in other women since meeting Anne, he hoped for a new love interest at *National Review* whose office would surely "have some females in it." (Kendall did not find true love at the magazine but was discovered *in flagrante* with a secretary at its office.) After mentioning to his sister that he was "entering the Roman Catholic Church," Kendall told Yvona that he took solace that Bill Buckley, his most "intimate" friend for the last five years, held him in high esteem. Buckley's devout Catholicism and sunny disposition provided an attractive model for Kendall during this crisis. When Kendall was confirmed as a member of the Catholic Church, Buckley served as his sponsor. Kendall's Yale graduate student, the political theorist Father Stanley Parry, CSC, officiated at the ceremony. On his conversion Kendall received a hearty note of congratulations from Bertrand de Jouvenel. The French political theorist told Willmoore that "what has happened to you is the most important thing which can happen in a man's life."[14]

Kendall took his new faith seriously enough that—even as he contemplated his second divorce—he was thinking about obtaining annulments. He hoped eventually to remarry as a Catholic. Later, in assisting Kendall in the annulment process, Buckley testified to his mentor's lack of maturity about marriage. Shortly before marrying Anne Brunsdale, he said, Willmoore had declared marriage to be "a quasi-commercial relationship which should be ended the moment incompatibility results." Willmoore married Anne, he said, because she was the nearest "of operative stimulants" and, he, "as was his habit, yielded to them." Months before, Buckley continued, Kendall had wanted to "marry one of my sisters." Shortly thereafter he said he would move to France to find his "ideal woman." Ken certainly knew, said Bill, that

"the conditions of a permanent marriage" were lacking in the relationship with Anne. Then he married her anyway.[15]

As Willmoore's second marriage collapsed, his professional situation at Yale worsened. Kendall tried to get along upon his return to campus but by now he had a well-developed, mostly negative reputation on campus. He passed students in graduate exams he wanted to fail, applying the "behaviorist" standards of other Yale professors. Nevertheless, his efforts to teach traditional political theory—that is, philosophical ideas grounded in the great thinkers of Western philosophy—were blocked at every turn. Even teaching classical theory as a window into "empirical" theory proved impossible. Regarding contemporary politics, Willmoore refused to pull his punches. In 1954, said the *Yale Daily News*, Kendall "was the only person" it interviewed in the political science department who thought Joseph McCarthy should not be censured. Kendall praised the senator's "conspicuous service in the struggle against domestic communism," criticizing senators "who still don't know the score on internal security." At a December 1954 campus event, Kendall debated two scientists, maintaining that "the government . . . should only employ scientists who can be proved to be loyal Americans."[16]

The next year Kendall became less visible on campus. In 1955, for example, the only mentions of Kendall in the *Yale Daily News* were in two articles about *National Review*. Within a couple of years he had become busy enough at the magazine that Yale noticed. Renting out the Northford property, he took an apartment in New York. In previous years Yale administrators had criticized Kendall for spending too much time "courting" students. Although he was on campus four days a week and present for his classes and office hours in 1955 and 1956, Provost E. S. Furniss admonished him for offering "part-time service to Yale." Furniss assured him that such criticism had nothing to do with the political slant of the new magazine. Yale, thought a frustrated Kendall, seemed sure to damn him if he did and then to damn him if he didn't.[17]

Stung by Furniss's criticism, Kendall increased his activity but not in a way to win over campus liberals. In a public lecture at Yale in April 1957, followed by "a vigorous question-answer series," Kendall said Americans "should preach what we practice." The people should refuse to tolerate communists, not as a clear and present danger but because their views were dangerous and false. "America," he continued, "is a country with a deep sense of orthodoxy. It is better to be overzealous than underzealous in guarding the orthodoxy of a community. America is now underzealous." Going on, Kendall said that he hoped he was "enormously brighter" than Joseph McCarthy but had "no quarrels with" the senator. If "a majority of the people" thought a person "wrong in his opinions," even if it were Kendall himself, that person might rightly "be barred from government service." In

fact, he noted, his own support for Joseph McCarthy had made it difficult to find a post in Washington. When McCarthy died the next week, Kendall was "deeply shocked." He mourned the controversial anticommunist as "a courageous patriot." McCarthy's monument would be "the improvements he wrought in our internal security system."[18]

Kendall and Buckley, whatever their national impact, were losing the battle for Yale. In June 1957 the *Yale Daily News* praised students for towing a moderate line, ignoring the radical left and "rantings of . . . the Far Right" (represented by Kendall) and for shunning the "consistent madness" of Buckley. When Kendall, in the "super-right National Review," dared suggest Yale President A. Whitney Griswold was part of the dominant liberal establishment, the *News* expressed regret that tenure protected his job. Two letters criticized the *News* for its attitude. Philosophy professor David Braybrooke suggested that by arguing to quash Kendall the article confirmed his hypothesis of repressive liberal hegemony. Undergraduate Stephen Williams called Kendall a "well-known Fascist-beast." But he also accused the *News* of practicing McCarthyism by falsely claiming Kendall had attacked Griswold. In February 1959 the *News* scoffed at Kendall's pretensions about perceiving "The Truth." It labeled his support for a binding public orthodoxy "Orwellian" (perhaps not realizing that the origins of this teaching came from Aristotle).[19]

Throughout these troubles at New Haven, Kendall remained an influential teacher. In well-honed Socratic style, he continued to attract favorable attention from many students. Ilie Smultea, for example, had come to Yale from Romania as an anticommunist refugee. He soon came under Kendall's influence. Kendall, he said, was "a great and very generous man" and "the most brilliant intellectual" he had known in the United States. Kendall inspired Smultea to obtain a doctorate in political science. Meeting Kendall was life changing for Yale undergraduate Oscar Pemantle, a native of India. In 1955, having just flummoxed conservative poet E. Merrill Root with a probing question at a public presentation, a self-confident Pemantle felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned around to meet Kendall. Introducing himself, Willmoore proceeded to demolish the arguments which had stumped the poet. Pemantle was so impressed that he changed his major to political science. Kendall was the best teacher he ever knew, a "matador" in the classroom, who provoked students through dialogue to think for themselves. Despite Willmoore's well-known political beliefs, he avoided indoctrinating students. He worked them hard, said Pemantle, to support their own positions logically. Pemantle was a leftist and appalled by his teacher's McCarthyism, but Kendall became and remained his "loyal and steadfast friend." Pemantle in turn became a lifelong champion and promoter of Kendall's interactive teaching style.[20]

In his scholarship Kendall remained an advocate of a Rousseauian, "absolute-majoritarian" position. Under pressure of personal and professional

difficulties, however, he began to modify this outlook in 1957. Throughout this period Kendall's scholarship continued to show contrarian brilliance. In September 1956, for example, Willmoore delivered an important series of lectures to a conference of conservative academics in Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania, a resort in the Poconos. It was if Daniel had volunteered to enter the lion's den. In the lectures, Kendall defended the right of the people to rule themselves and to resist the aggrandizement of experts. He also suggested that the people of Athens were right to put Socrates to death and voiced support for Rousseau's philosophy of the general will. Traditionalist Russell Kirk, center-right historian Clinton Rossiter, and libertarian Murray Rothbard were all in the audience. They were, respectively, amused, intrigued, and horrified. Both Kirk and Rothbard abhorred Rousseau but for diametrically opposed reasons (Kirk as an enemy of tradition and Rothbard as an enemy of liberty). Rothbard recognized Kendall's arguments as an attack on libertarianism. He labeled him "the philosopher *extraordinaire* of the lynch mob," whose majoritarian principles might be used to justify the crucifixion.[21]

In these lectures Kendall conjoined several themes which later appeared as scholarly publications. Kendall claimed that he hated and feared liberalism because it was antidemocratic. He argued that an unholy trinity of self-proclaimed experts—bureaucrats, academics, and journalists—dominated American society and politics. His ideas here mirrored those of Italian communist thinker Antonio Gramsci. Instead of emphasizing class conflict, Kendall focused on conflict between ruling elites and the people, tout court. Without reference to Gramscian hegemony (not yet de rigeur in American universities), Kendall discussed how an interconnected liberal elite exercised dominion over the people. By controlling elite universities, leading media, and the federal bureaucracy, these groups—all dominated by liberals—monopolized not just how important political questions were decided but even how they were framed and the factual narratives underlying them.[22]

Kendall then argued that the American people often acquiesced to such dominance because much of it was hidden and because they overprized elite claims to expertise. Pursuing this point, Kendall dissected John Stuart Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government*. He agreed with Mill that that any modern society required specialists for administrative expertise and guidance. Insofar as they possessed genuine know-how, such experts might provide accurate predictions about the consequences of certain courses of action. Yet such experts had no special capability to determine what the nation *ought* to do in a particular case. They had no special insight into what was *good* for the country. Rather the people of a democracy—once properly informed—should decide what course to pursue to promote their own welfare. Mill and followers paid lip service to representative government while arguing that experts—not the hoi polloi—should make the important decisions.[23]

Entranced with its own cleverness, this "Great Bureaucracy" then reified individual rights to undermine democracy. Like Mill many liberals argued for an absolute right to free expression, what Kendall called the "simon-pure" theory of free speech. In practice most American liberals, aping the Supreme Court, added an "escape clause" to Mill's doctrine. They would only ban expression which constituted a "clear-and-present danger" to the nation. The simon-pure notion, said Kendall, was "root and branch false." It provided individuals with a degree of freedom which no nation could actually tolerate. Adding the escape clause also demonstrated liberal hypocrisy. It often applied to rank-and-file American communists who were not a serious danger to the United States. Both groups of liberals were relativists. Skeptical toward all claims to truth, they applied this principle selectively. They believed, for example, that "all questions were open questions . . . except the question whether all questions are open questions . . . which [was] a *closed* question." Within their own bailiwicks of power, and especially within the three-headed "Great Bureaucracy," liberals ruthlessly suppressed views which contradicted their own ideas about protecting free expression.[24]

Kendall argued that individual rights, including free expression, were great social goods. He cited his own willingness to debate all comers to show the real value he put on the free exchange of ideas. Though valuable, free speech (and other individual rights) were not, and could not be, the only or the greatest goods for a functional society. The people ought to have serious reasons to limit these social goods (aka individual rights), but in a democracy they had to possess the power to do so at their discretion. Kendall illustrated this point with a long analysis of Plato's "Crito" and "Apology." The Athenian Assembly, he said, had been within its rights to execute Socrates because he refused to stop condemning the Athenian "way of life." The assembly, whose very reason for being was "to preserve this society and way of life," came to see Socrates as a public enemy who deserved death. The philosopher refused to moderate his charges that Athenians were so focused on fame and fortune that their way of life was "not worth living." He also recognized that as a citizen of Athens, the assembly possessed legitimate authority over him and refused to flee the city. Therefore, Socrates himself was no defender of the "simon-pure" doctrine of free expression. He accepted the principle, even at the cost of his life, that the Athenian people possessed legitimate authority to silence him.[25]

A couple of years later Kendall published a condensed version of these views on Socrates in *Modern Age*. The article reiterated that to survive every society must impose limits on freedom, including freedom of expression. Kendall again argued that not only was Athens correct to force Socrates to drink hemlock but that Socrates validated the principle of majority rule by accepting death at the hands of the people. Richard Weaver wrote to Kendall

to praise his Socrates article. Clinton Rossiter let Kendall know that he had encountered the article in *Modern Age*. Reading it, he said, "brought back warm memories of a famous time together we had in the Poconos.' Although Rossiter still could not "go along" with Kendall's thesis, he could, "by God, say this: you are the number one Socrates in the United States today." Rossiter then asked Willmoore: "What makes you so damned logical?"[26]

In 1956, at the very end of his absolute majoritarian phase, Kendall coauthored *Democracy and the American Party System* with Austin Ranney. A college-level textbook published by Harcourt-Brace, the book aimed to counteract "the unfriendliness of American political science literature" toward the U.S. political "system and its workings." The first four chapters, written by Kendall, set up a model of democracy which upheld his vision of majoritarianism. Ranney completed the next fifteen chapters, detailing the historical nuts and bolts of American parties. The two men apparently worked more closely together on the book's last three chapters. They concluded that American parties had contributed to the continuing health of democracy in the United States. Rossiter called Kendall's contribution to the book "the best thing that had ever been done on the American parties." Most reviews of the book were disappointing. Even so, the textbook sold relatively well. It remained in print for years, was adopted in many college classrooms, and earned lasting royalties for its authors.[27]

Although mostly neglected by scholars, *Democracy and the American Political System* provided the most complete statement of Kendall's absolute-majoritarian position (before he modified it in ensuing years). Kendall defined democracy as a "purely political conception" rather than as a feel-good, catchall synonym for the good life, as John Dewey used it. His definition, said Kendall, had the advantage of precision. By focusing on democracy as a form of government, he defined it as a political process. He looked at how its laws were crafted, not whether such laws were in themselves right or wrong. Kendall then went on to argue that only "unlimited majority rule" was fully democratic. Any system which prevented the majority from changing the governing system—say by putting the individual's right to free speech or to bear arms off limits—involved, ipso facto, rule by the minority which opposed such change. He dismissed fears of "majority tyranny" against a minority as applying even more strongly to minority tyranny against the majority.[28]

In the real world compromises of democratic purity were inevitable. Kendall therefore developed a model to judge *how* democratic any particular system of government was. To be democratic in more than name, he said a polity must, to a significant degree, operate in accord with four component principles. These principles included popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation, and majority rule. By popular sovereignty Kendall

meant that sovereignty needed to rest with the people, not with an individual or with a small group. Political equality required "an equal chance for each member of the community to participate in the total decision-making process of the community." Popular consultation signified the necessity of regular, peaceful methods to learn the people's will. By majority rule, Kendall meant that a democratic government must "justify its actions on the grounds that they accord with the wishes of a majority of the enfranchised members of the community."[29]

A perfect democracy, for Kendall, meant the unanimous, harmonious, and direct consent of all community members. But such a system was impossible in large nations. For a good model of operational democracy, Kendall looked at New England town meetings. He showed how, on a small scale, they accorded well with the model he had developed. Then he attempted "blowing up" the town meeting to carry its attributes up to the level of the nation-state. One key difference soon became obvious. Large-scale government was necessarily representative, rather than direct. As citizens could not control administrative personnel face to face, they had to elect persons to "ride herd" on bureaucrats. Large-scale democracy required that citizens possess accurate information so that they could make informed decisions on issues about which they lacked direct knowledge. Another key issue in scaling up small-town democracy involved maintaining consensus over a wide and varied area. Keeping a large, democratic country together required frequent, conciliatory discussion among elected representatives. Such consultations, he argued, served to maintain harmony among multifarious factions. To Kendall, then, making democracy work in a large country required electing representatives to enact the will of the people. To maintain social consensus, democracy also required careful deliberation among these representatives.[30]

In the concluding chapters of *Democracy and the American Party System*, Kendall (writing with Ranney) showed that he still accepted the historical consensus of his day of the American founders as antidemocratic reactionaries. They had designed a system to protect property—from what they saw as excesses of democracy. Kendall did criticize former muse J. Allen Smith for exaggerating the antidemocratic aspects of American politics. He also suggested that nonideological political parties with overlapping platforms helped maintain American political consensus. With deep social and economic divisions and a long tradition of violence, the United States, Kendall and Ranney argued, had real "civil war potential." By avoiding purely ideological foci and by seeking to include many groups with diverse perspectives from every region, the parties had kept many different social groups within the political system. With each faction working within the party system to achieve its ends, national cohesion was maintained even over the wide expanses of a diverse and turbulent nation.[31]

Within a year, however, Kendall's political theory began to change significantly. In light of his conversion to Catholicism, reading Eric Voegelin and Leo Strauss, and being stung by Rothbard's criticism at Buck Hill Falls, Kendall abandoned his previous value-neutral approach. Aside from the value of democracy itself, his theory had been largely neutral about ethics and religion. Kendall had known Eric Voegelin for years. He was stunned, however, when he read the German scholar's book *Israel and Revelation*. He called it "the most breath-taking book I have ever seen." Following Voegelin, Kendall came to the "breathtaking" conclusion that civilization began with human realization of the existence of God, of a purpose bigger than itself, a purpose outside history. Human beings thereafter could help create and sustain society by using their reason and knowledge to serve divine and eternal purposes. No longer did they need to serve transient human desires within history. Voegelin, said Kendall, argued that whenever "men establish a government," they repeated, by analogy, God's creation of the universe. They willed into existence a new order. Human societies and political constitutions existed "under God." Therefore, to organize a society as if its purpose "were *within* History" was "self-defeating." Rejecting revelation, said Kendall per Voegelin, had led modern societies to treat religion as a "'value preference,' in the same category with a fondness for Bel Paese cheese." Accepting Voegelin meant that "all modern political theory is an attempt to square the circle." Awakened, Kendall began to assign Voegelin to his students at Yale. He also attempted to integrate Voegelin's ideas into his own political theory.[32]

The ideas of Leo Strauss also had a great effect on Kendall's teaching, inspiring him to focus more on formal political theory and less on activism. Although ambiguous about the value of religious belief, the Straussians rejected relativism. They thought eternal truths existed and were accessible to reason. Strauss and company rejected relativism, including historicism (truth varies by historical era) and conventionalism (humans establish truth through agreed-upon conventions). Thus, the job of political philosophy was to discover truth and the good and to promote a society based upon them. Strauss disliked, together with Kendall, "behaviorists" who focused upon "statistical analysis of the phenomena of political 'behavior.'" Unlike most American political scientists, Kendall said, the Straussians knew Plato and penned pleasing prose. Unusually deferential to the University of Chicago professor, Kendall began to funnel students to him for doctoral work. He praised the Straussians as a "new breed" of political scientists. In 1957, for example, Kendall commended Strauss disciple Walter Berns, then at Yale, for his book *Freedom, Virtue, and the First Amendment*. Kendall agreed with Berns that the federal courts by exalting free speech had undercut the ability of localities to act as "custodians of community" who could protect "social decency" from abuses of freedom.[33]

An unpublished article from 1957 showed Kendall transitioning away from his absolute majoritarianism. He rested this new stance on the Declaration of Independence. When inalienable rights and popular desires conflicted, Kendall argued that rights possessed a logically "superordinate" position. He claimed that the Constitution created a flawed system in which inviolable principles came up for debate at each election. This article revealed Kendall's first effort to integrate moral verities—beyond that of democracy itself—into his political theory. He argued for constructing public policy for "reason of God," even at the cost of overturning the American "constitutional order." Kendall's former students were puzzled. Buckley found "unconvincing" Kendall's notion that the Constitution amounted to "a previously undiscerned *volte face*" by the founders. He also criticized the article as too scholastic. Brent Bozell defended the article. He argued that Kendall was "the best man in the business at proving what something says." *National Review* ought to "turn him loose on the country's basic political documents" for the edification of readers. Ultimately, the magazine rejected Willmoore's article. Annoyed at the time, Kendall eventually realized that this failure to publish saved him embarrassing retractions in the future.[34]

In the Spring Semester of 1957 Kendall suffered a far harsher rejection, as Yale denied his application for promotion. Bertrand de Jouvenel was a guest at Kendall's house at Northford when this rebuff occurred. He recalled that night as one of "desperate unhappiness." Kendall moaned and shouted in his sleep. It became apparent to the reluctant listener that Willmoore's pain stemmed not just from "immediate disappointment" but from long-standing psychological hurts. In June, James Fesler told Kendall that he would never win promotion to full professor at Yale because he had not published enough. One might agree—with Jeffrey Hart—that Yale's evaluation was reasonable, that Kendall had not produced enough top-notch scholarly work for an Ivy League professorship. Yet, others in the department had become full professors with fewer publications. Strauss had informed Yale that Kendall was a serious, thoughtful, and insightful scholar. In its evaluation the department excluded the Ranney-Kendall textbook, publications for ORO, and work for *National Review*. Fesler said none of this work involved scholarship in political theory and so should be disregarded. Voegelin undercut Kendall, putting his "publicistic activities for the cause of ideological conservatism" on the "debit side" against him. Though Kendall saw such work as a "public service," Voegelin called it as a "waste of time and energy." Fesler also "let slip" that the university thought Kendall did "real harm in the classroom." Kendall's critics, that is, feared his allure as a teacher. They worried that his prowess in the classroom would entice talented students to conservatism. Other evidence showed that Kendall's exclusion had to do with lack of collegiality, that he "was an S.O.B." However one evaluates his scholarship,

personal and political issues were unquestionably involved in Yale denying him promotion.[35]

Despite disappointment, Kendall soldiered on, vigorously upholding his views on and off campus. On October 21, 1957, for example, he debated philosopher Paul Weiss, a strong leftist, before a packed audience at Yale's John Dewey Society. The topic was academic freedom. Weiss argued that universities should serve all mankind and tolerate virtually all shades of opinion. Kendall defended academic standards against a view of education as a scholastic free-for-all. A university, he added, "is a place where the talking of foolishness should be discouraged as a matter of course." Anticipating arguments philosopher Thomas Kuhn made a few years later, Kendall suggested that academic disciplines did not tolerate all opinions. Certain views were taboo in the academy to the point of making their advocates unemployable pariahs. A university was "the carrier of a congeries of orthodoxies." It should not be free "to defy the broader society" without expecting "retaliatory measures" from said society. To maintain itself, freedom, including academic freedom, implied limits. The debaters enjoyed their "lively and friendly" exchange even though, said the *Yale Daily News*, "each thought the other was a schnook." A few months later, Kendall delivered a campus speech assailing the Eisenhower administration. Eisenhower, he said, had delivered "himself into the hands of the liberally dominated bureaucracy." Ike's administration, he added, had disappointed conservatives. It "appeases the Soviet Union, neglects the nation's defenses, and dedicates itself to egalitarian social reform."[36]

In his double role as professor and spokesman for the new conservatism, Kendall remained in the public eye. He gave frequent speeches, signing petitions, engaging in debates, and appearing on television and radio. In these endeavors, he reaffirmed his reputation as a contrarian ever ready to challenge conventional wisdom and deflate overblown egos. That fall, together with Medford Evans, he debated two ACLU lawyers. The question was the propriety of Harvard inviting J. Robert Oppenheimer, a former communist, to deliver its prestigious William James Lectures. Harvard tried to obstruct the event, but, said author M. Stanton Evans, the hall "was crowded with students and townspeople; it was a rousing debate, thoroughly enjoyed by all concerned." Then in April 1958 Willmoore appeared at the National Conference on Political Parties in Hayden Lake, Idaho. As the conference opened, he had a "fiery exchange" with Minnesota Congressman Eugene McCarthy. Kendall maintained that the Supreme Court was engaged "in a conspiracy against the Constitution." By promoting an "open society," the Court was preventing the "stringent regulation" of communism which most Americans favored. McCarthy admitted a need for "some restraints on liberty" but argued that the Court had not weakened "internal security" while protecting individual

freedom. As the meeting concluded, Kendall launched a two-pronged attack on Paul Butler, national chairman of the Democratic Party, and on Bertha Adkins, assistant national Republican Party chair. In this exchange Kendall defended the proposition that the country ought "to have two parties which have no basic differences." He suggested that making parties more ideologically distinct and nationalizing most political issues—a development Butler and Adkins both advocated—would "divide the nation."[37]

In February 1957 Kendall commented publicly on Rev. Billy Graham's recent visit to Yale. He called Graham a "powerful" speaker. He praised how he stimulated campus discussions but believed this effect would be short-lived. He thought Graham "too slow afoot intellectually" to appeal to Yale students. He was a "remarkable pleader . . . who almost reduces Christianity to Madison Avenue." In 1958 Kendall moved on to condemn the "great and good" Albert Schweitzer for bad logic. The famous theologian and missionary, Kendall argued, had proposed that anything "intolerable" could not also be valid or true, that is, Schweitzer suggested that communism could not be that bad because to fight it robustly risked nuclear war which was "intolerable." In 1959 Kendall met Karl Barth, the famous liberal Swiss theologian. Barth complimented Kendall. He told him that their half hour conversation gave him "a new understanding of the Right-wing position." The response was vintage Willmoore. "All that proves," he replied, was that: "You have not been doing your homework, and don't understand the position you are attacking."[38]

Nor was Kendall getting warm and fuzzy in his scholarship. In June 1958 he published a devastating reply to Herbert McClosky in the *American Political Science Review*. McClosky, an old rival, had put together a "team" to write an article called "Conservatism and Personality" for the *APSR*. This team discovered that conservatives were ill-informed, "backward," "rigid," "obscurantist," authoritarian, and "alienated." Considering the article "asinine" and "manifestly idiotic," Leo Strauss did not deign to reply. Kendall, however, used his gift for textual analysis in a "shattering" rejoinder to McClosky. The article claimed that conservatism lacked real substance, except resistance to liberalism. Kendall pointed out that this same rubric applied in reverse to liberalism. Kendall showed the study's questionnaires were designed to make liberals look smarter than conservatives. Its population quartiles, for example, ranged from "extreme conservative" to "liberal," with no extreme liberals in sight. More damningly the behaviorist "team" made key reasoning errors. It treated personality characteristics as if as easy to measure as "weight and height." It then logically failed to connect its list of conservative characteristics to the forty-three point conservative creed it used to measure responses. To appear in print, this rejoinder had to overcome objections from a board member who said he would support publishing it if anyone but Willmoore Kendall had written it.[39]

To escape his situation in Yale, Kendall planned a research sabbatical in Spain, funded by the conservative Relm Foundation. Then he got a surprise offer from Stanford. He put his sabbatical on hold and went west to take up a yearlong post as visiting associate professor in political theory. This move, he said, freed him from the "crushing burden" of his "commitments to *National Review*." With Kendall gone, "The Liberal Line" disappeared permanently. The upcoming year in Palo Alto—despite some embarrassing moments—would prove productive, even redemptive for him, both professionally and personally. At Stanford Kendall replaced Mulford Sibley. Sibley's pacifism and socialism had prevented him, at the last minute, from obtaining a permanent post in political theory. The "fundamental ugliness of the events" in the Sibley matter led Kendall to believe he had little chance of getting a permanent position. Despite their political differences and his own disappointment Sibley helped Kendall find a place to live.[40]

Kendall hardly got settled in before serious trouble arose. Early in the semester he showed up for work smelling of alcohol. He made the excuse that he had been suffering from the flu and had medicated himself with his traditional remedy of "hot-buttered rum." More serious was an incident which occurred shortly thereafter. Menlo Park police stopped Kendall and charged him with drunk driving. Kendall had been driving the wrong way on a one-way street. He pleaded guilty, but because he had been wearing a tuxedo after attending a formal dinner party and was a Stanford professor, the story made it into the papers. Both incidents occurred within a few weeks of arriving on campus. Provost F. E. Terman informed Willmoore that further incidents of the kind, "either on campus or off," meant immediate termination.[41] Hardly an auspicious start.

Although relocation had freed Kendall from the pressures he felt at New Haven, Northford, and New York, he found himself isolated. He seldom socialized with the political science faculty, most of whom remained aloof. As reported by one student, Kendall scandalized the faculty wives by appearing at a Christmas party, accompanied by a beautiful young graduate student in a "spectacular" red dress. Perhaps this companion was Nellie Cooper, a local librarian fifteen years Kendall's junior. During his first semester at Stanford, Willmoore put an entry into the local "Lonely Hearts Club." Answering his missive was Ms. Cooper, an attractive, Canadian-born, ex-Marine, who was looking for excitement in her life. When she met Willmoore Kendall, she perhaps got more excitement than she bargained for. The two lonely hearts hit it off and remained together for the next decade. Cooper, a Catholic, was less intellectually inclined than either of Kendall's first two wives. She did not come from a privileged background like Anne Brunsdale. On the other hand, Nellie had a strong determination to pursue her goals. Officially serving as Kendall's live-in secretary for a number of years before they became

engaged, her mental toughness allowed her to brush off Willmoore's often outrageous behavior in a way many women could not have done. Her devotion to Kendall was genuine and continued unabated for decades after his death.[42]

Meanwhile, Kendall flourished both as a teacher and as a public speaker at Stanford. Overcoming his "neurosis" about lecturing (and making exaggerated claims *never* to have led a lecture-based class), he got up regularly at 5:00 a.m. and worked until 1:00 p.m. on class days, then went immediately to deliver the resulting lecture. The lectures often included explication of Strauss and Voegelin. "The first ten days were hell," he told Charles Hyneman, but then "overnight, I got the knack of it." Kendall kept himself busy that year by working up 120 lectures from scratch. Kendall had an "electrifying" effect on Stanford students. Attendance at his lectures was

Figure 6.1 Nellie Cooper Kendall. *Source:* Photo by Wilfred Cooper, Courtesy of Chuck and Pam Graham.

standing room only with classroom turnout "running 150% of enrollment." Through careful preparation of these lectures (keeping an eye toward future publication), Kendall said he felt himself "'coming to' intellectually." He was moving forward again after years of avoiding the reading he felt was necessary to move his scholarship forward. His numerous public lectures and debates—including the well-attended showdown with Sibley—had made a positive impression and lifted his mood. The year at Stanford, Kendall told Buckley, had made him "about as uninhibited as you about speaking," then added: "May God forgive me."[43]

While teaching at Stanford, Willmoore had an intellectual epiphany. This one was more lasting than that he had about the Declaration of Independence in 1957. Kendall became a Madisonian. "*Nobody*," he told Buckley in June 1959, "understands the sources of the American political tradition anymore: in scholarship, the whole business has got to be re-examined; and I look forward eagerly to doing the re-examining." It was in Palo Alto, then, that Kendall made his last major intellectual turn. He acquired an intellectual perspective which he would retain and work to elucidate for the rest of his life. "The key issue," he continued, was "that Madison was not trying to prevent majority-rule but majority tyranny," that is, "'unjust' actions by majorities." Contra his unpublished 1957 article, Kendall now defended "the Framers for not having included a Bill of Rights." Moreover, he now regarded "Madison, not Rousseau," as the foremost political thinker of the eighteenth century.[44] Kendall was ready to formulate a new and improved version of his political theory.

By the end of the academic year Kendall had come to view his time at Stanford as "a smash success." The incidents with alcohol early in his tenure and a national letter-writing campaign from liberal political scientists meant that he would get no permanent post. Four Stanford faculty had approached Kendall with a proposal to have him appointed as a tenured associate professor with control of teaching political theory at the university. This position was to involve a large increase over his Yale salary. Except for his "brush with the police," Willmoore claimed, the proposal would have envisioned a full professorship. Ultimately, "feuding" within the department prevented the extension of an official offer. There was also talk among students about raising money for an endowed Herbert Hoover Chair of Political Philosophy. This effort fizzled out quickly. At the end of the year, Provost Terman wrote Kendall a surprisingly warm letter. He praised Willmoore for "presenting your views vigorously yet temperately." By participating "in public events on the campus" Kendall had helped make it a "lively" year. He had helped students to think and sparked their "interest in political and social questions."[45] Happy to avoid Yale, Kendall headed to Madrid for a two-year research sabbatical.

By the late 1950s Kendall knew he had moved, as Hyneman put it, from being a "controversial figure" into a "subject of near-universal disapproval." Hyneman attributed this development to Kendall playing "too rough in oral communications" and Kendall's "vigorous anti-communism" including association with McCarthy and Buckley. However, Hyneman praised Kendall's "rigorous pursuit of logic" and regarded his political theory as original and of the highest order. Some might regard Kendall's positions "as outside the limits of legitimacy," but Hyneman disagreed. He compared Kendall to Paracelsus whose contrarian views were accepted by later generations as truth. By being unconventional, his path to success was more difficult than for a tamer scholar who might easily publish books while mingling with like-minded colleagues. Libertarian Murray Rothbard was tougher and recognized the irony in his antagonist's situation. Using Willmoore's "*own* premises," said Rothbard, "Sherman Adams [Eisenhower's Chief of Staff] should put Kendall to death this instant."[46]

NOTES

1. "The Editors of *National Review* Believe:" *NR*, November 19, 1955, p. 8.

2. Dwight Macdonald, "Eggheads"; John Fischer, "The Editor's Easy Chair: Why is the Conservative Voice So Hoarse," *Harper's*, March 1956, pp. 16–22.

3. RPO, *Jewish Strategy*, vii; EV to WK, March 20, 1957, B15F1, KP; R.B. McCallum to WK, July 23, 1956, B30, Folder 12, KP; WK to BDJ, November 15, 1955 and [1956], B16F2, KP; WB to BDJ, February 5, 1958 and March 24, 1958, B5, BP; WK to CH, January 6, 1956, B7, CHP.

4. WB Statement to *National Review* Board of Directors, April 28, 1958 and William to *National Review* Directors, November 26, 1958, B5, BP.

5. Judis, *Buckley*, 130–34; WB, *Miles Gone By: A Literary Autobiography* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004), 283–86; WK to CH, January 6, 1956, B7, CHP; Susan Currie Sivek, "Editing Conservatism: How *National Review* Magazine Framed and Mobilized a Political Movement," January 1, 2007, p. 5–11, Linfield University, http://digitalcommons.linfield.edu; Hart, *Mind*, *passim*; Wills, *Confessions*, 33–35; Sam Tanenhaus, "Choosing Sides: The Writers and Politicians Who Sculpted Today's Extreme Divisions," *New Republic*, November 2018, p. 58.

6. Nash, "Iconoclast II," 247; WK, "The Liberal Line," *NR*, November 19, 1955, p. 8, November 26, 1955, p. 22, December 7, 1955, p. 24, December 14, 1955, p. 8, December 21, 1955, p. 8, December 28, 1955, p. 8, March 7, 1956, March 14, 1956, p. 14, April 25, 1956, and October 26, 1957, p. 370; WK, "The Printed Word," *NR*, January 3, 1959, p. 431.

7. WK, "The Liberal Line," *NR*, January 4, 1956, p. 8, January 18, 1956, p. 8, March 14, 1956, p. 14, June 13, 1956, p. 16, and September 14, 1957, p. 229. WK, "Whose American