

## THE PHILOSOPHICAL

"NEW CONSERVATISM" (1962)

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The author's preceding chapter of 1955, in the symposium book *The New American Right*, treats this new right as mainly the right-wing radicals of McCarthyism and of Midwest neo-populist Republicanism. Hence, the 1955 chapter fails to deal with something far more serious intellectually—the non-McCarthyite, non-thought-controlling movement known as “the new conservatism.” The latter movement, being non-popular and being burdened with, partly, merited philosophical pretensions, is restricted mainly to the campuses and the magazine world, even though it sometimes lends ghost-writers and an egghead façade to the popular political arena outside.

The extreme McCarthy emphasis of the 1955 chapter was justified in the exceptional context of the early 1950s. It is perhaps no longer justified in the context of this 1962 edition. As for over-publicized groups like the John Birch Society, fortunately they have no chance of attaining anything like the mass base attained by McCarthy, Coughlin, or Huey Long. This is because they lack the demagogic populist or pseudo-socialist economic platform without which chauvinist thought-control movements have no chance of success. Note that Hitler called himself not merely a nationalist but a National Socialist. Note that Huey Long (“every man a king”), Coughlin (“free silver”), and McCarthy (“socialistic” farm subsidies) had a similar rightist-leftist amalgam rather than a purely rightist or nationalist platform.

Though the pseudo-conservatism of Long-Coughlin-Mc-

Carthy seems dead for the time being, and though that of the John Birchers seems stillborn, the philosophical "new conservatism" is still—on its admittedly smaller scale—alive. Alive whether for better or worse, its merits and defects being approximately equal. Since the present author furnished the first postwar book of the new conservatism—*Conservatism Revisited: The Revolt Against Revolt* (1949, reprinted by Collier Books, 1962)—he bears a certain responsibility: again, "whether for better or worse." Hence, since the new conservatism is still alive and since it was not included in the preceding chapter of 1955, the following supplementary chapter seems in order.

## I

In the 1930s, when the present author, still a student, was writing an article for the *Atlantic Monthly* urging "a Burkean 'new conservatism in America,'" and to some extent even as late as his *Conservatism Revisited* of 1949, "conservatism" was an unpopular epithet. In retrospect it becomes almost attractively amusing (like contemplating a dated period piece) to recall how violently one was denounced in those days for suggesting that Burke, Calhoun, and Irving Babbitt were not "Fascist beasts" and that our relatively conservative Constitution was not really a plot-in-advance, by rich bogeymen like George Washington and the Federalist Party. For example, the author's *Atlantic* article, written in prewar student days, was denounced more because the word used ("conservative") was so heretical than because of any effort by the Popular Frontist denouncers to read what was actually said. It was the first-written and worst-written appeal ever published in America for what it called a "new" conservatism ("new" meaning non-Republican, non-commercialist, non-conformist). This new conservatism it viewed as synthesizing in some future day the ethical New Deal social reforms with the more pessimistic, anti-mass insights of America's Burkean founders. Such a synthesis, argued the article, would help make the valuable anti-Fascist movement among literary intellectuals

simultaneously anti-Communist also, leaving behind the Popular Frontist illusions of the 1930s.

As the liberal Robert Bendiner then put it, "Out of some 140,000,000 people in the United States, at least 139,500,000 are liberals, to hear them tell it. . . . Rare is the citizen who can bring himself to say, 'Sure I'm a conservative.' . . . Any American would sooner drop dead than proclaim himself a reactionary." In July, 1950, a newspaper was listing the charges against a prisoner accused of creating a public disturbance. One witness charged, "He was using abusive and obscene language, calling people conservatives add all that."

When conservatism was still a dirty word, it seethed gallantly non-conformist to defend it against the big, smug liberal majority among one's fellow writers and professors. In those days, therefore, the author deemed it more helpful to stress the virtues of conservative thought than its faults, and this is what he did in the 1949 edition of *Conservatism Revisited*. But in the mood emerging from the 1950s, blunt speaking about conservatism's important defects no longer runs the danger of obscuring its still more important virtues.

The main defect of the new conservatism, threatening to make it a transient fad irrelevant to real needs, is its rootless nostalgia for roots. Conservatives of living roots were Washington and Coleridge in their particular America and England, Metternich in his special Austria, Donoso Cortés in his Spain, Calhoun in his antebellum South, Adenauer and Churchill in the 1950s. American conservative writings of living roots were the *Federalist* of Hamilton, Madison, Jay, 1787-88; the *Defense of the Constitutions* of John Adams, 1787-88; the *Letters of Publicola* of John Quincy Adams, 1791; Calhoun's *Disquisition and Discourse*, posthumously published in 1850; Irving Babbitt's *Democracy and Leadership*, 1924. In contrast, today's conservatism of yearning is based on roots either never existent or no longer existent. Such a conservatism of nostalgia can still be of high literary value. It is also valuable as an unusually detached perspective about current social foibles. But it does real harm when it leaves

literature and enters short-run politics, conjuring up mirages to conceal sordid realities or to distract from them.

In America, southern agrarianism has long been the most gifted literary form of the conservatism of yearning. Its most important intellectual manifesto was the Southern symposium *I'll Take My Stand* (1930), contrasting the cultivated human values of a lost aristocratic agrarianism with Northern commercialism and liberal materialism. At their best, these and more recent examples of the conservatism of yearning are needed warnings against shallow practicality. The fact that such warnings often come from the losing side of our Civil War is in itself a merit; thereby they caution a nation of success-worshippers against the price of success. But at their worst such books of the 1930s, and again of today, lack the living roots of genuine conservatism and have only lifeless ones. The lifeless ones are really a synthetic substitute for roots, contrived by romantic nostalgia. They are a test-tube conservatism, a lab job of powdered Burke or cake-mix Calhoun.

Such romanticizing conservatives refuse to face up to the old and solid historical roots of most or much American liberalism. What is really rootless and abstract is not the increasingly conservatized New Deal liberalism but their own utopian dream of an aristocratic agrarian restoration. Their unhistorical appeal to history, their traditionless worship of tradition, characterize the conservatism of writers like Russell Kirk.

In contrast, a genuinely rooted, history minded conservative conserves the roots that are *really there*, exactly as Burke did when he conserved not only the monarchist-conservative aspects of William III's bloodless revolution of 1688 but also its constitutional-liberal aspects. The latter aspects, formulated by the British philosopher John Locke, have been summarized in England and America ever since by the word "Lockean."

Via the Constitutional Convention of 1787, this liberal-conservative heritage of 1688 became rooted in America as a blend of Locke's very moderate liberalism and Burke's very moderate conservatism. From the rival Federalists and Jeffer-

sonians through today, all our major rival parties have continued this blend, though with varied proportion and stress. American history is based on the resemblance between moderate liberalism and moderate conservatism; the history of Continental Europe is based on the difference between extreme liberalism and extreme conservatism.

But some American new conservatives import from Continental Europe a conservatism that totally rejects even our moderate native liberalism. In the name of free speech and intellectual gadflyism, they are justified in expounding the indiscriminate anti-liberalism of hothouse Bourbons and czarist serf-floggers. But they are not justified in calling themselves American traditionalists or in claiming any except exotic roots for their position in America. Let them present their case frankly as anti-traditional, rootless revolutionaries of Europe's authoritarian right wing, attacking the deep-rooted American tradition of liberal-conservative synthesis. Conservative authority, yes; right-wing authoritarianism, no. Authority means a necessary reverence for tradition, law, legitimacy; authoritarianism means statist coercion based only on force, not moral roots, and suppressing individual liberties in the Continental fashion of czarism, Junkerdom, Maistrean ultraroyalism.

Our argument is not against importing European insights when applicable; that would be Know-Nothing chauvinism. The more foreign imports the better, when capable of being assimilated: for example, the techniques of French symbolism in studying American poetry or the status-resentment theory of Nietzsche in studying the new American right. But when the European view or institution is neither applicable to the American reality nor capable of being assimilated therein, as is the case with the sweeping Maistre-style anti-liberalism and tyrannic authoritarianism of many of the new conservatives, then objections do become valid, not on grounds of bigoted American chauvinism but on grounds of distinguishing between what can, what cannot, be transplanted viably and freedom-enhancingly.

The Burkean builds on the concrete existing historical base,

not on a vacuum of abstract wishful thinking. When, as in America; that concrete base includes British liberalism of the 1680s and New Deal reforms of the 1930s, then the real American conservator assimilates into conservatism whatever he finds lasting and good in liberalism and in the New Deal. Thereby he is closer to the Tory Cardinal Newman than many of Newman's American reactionary admirers. The latter overlook Newman's realization of the need to "inherit and make the best of" liberalism in certain contexts:

If I might presume to contrast Lacordaire and myself, I should say that we had been both of us inconsistent;—he, a Catholic, in calling himself a Liberal; I, a Protestant, in being an Anti-liberal; and moreover, that the cause of this inconsistency had been in both cases one and the same. That is, we were both of us such good conservatives as to take up with what we happened to find established in our respective countries, at the time when we came into active life. Toryism was the creed of Oxford; he inherited, and, made the best of, the French Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

How can thoughtful new conservatives, avoiding the political pitfalls that so many have failed to avoid, apply fruitfully to American life today what we have called non-political "cultural conservatism"—the tradition of Melville, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Henry Adams, Irving Babbitt, William Faulkner? In order to conserve our classical humanistic values against what he called "the impieties of progress," Melville had issued the following four-line warning to both kinds of American materialists: (1) the deracinating, technology-brandishing industrialists; their so-called freedom and progress is merely the economic "individualism" of Manchester-liberal pseudo-conservatism; and (2) the leftist collectivists; their unity is not a rooted organic growth of shared values<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> From the appendix of the second edition (London, 1865) of Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*.

<sup>2</sup> Here to be defined as "archetypes."

but a mechanical artifact of, apriorist blueprint, abstractions,<sup>3</sup> imposed gashingly upon concrete society by a procrustean statist bureaucracy. The last-named distinction—between a unity that is grown and a unity that is made—differentiates the anti-cash-nexus and anti-rugged-individualism of "Tory Socialists" (in the aristocratic Shaftesbury-Disraeli-F.D.R.-Stevenson tradition) from the anti-capitalism of Marxist Socialists or left-liberal materialists. Here, then, is Melville's little-known warning to both bourgeois and Marxist materialists:

Not magnitude, not lavishness,

But Form—the site;

Not innovating wilfulness,

But reverence for the Archetype.

A scrutiny of the plain facts of the situation has forced our report on the new conservatives to be mainly negative. But a positive contribution is indeed being made by all those thinkers, novelists, and poets in the spirit of this Melville quotation today (whether or not they realize their own conservatism) who are making Americans aware of the tragic antithesis between archetypes and stereotypes in life and between art and technique in literature. Let us clarify this closely related pair of antitheses and then briefly apply them to that technological brilliance which is corrupting our life and literature today. Only by this unpopular and needed task, closer in spirit to the creative imagination of a Faulkner or an Emily Dickinson than to the popular bandwagons of politics, can the new conservatism still overcome its current degeneration into either (at best) Manchester-liberal economic materialism or (at worst) right-wing nationalist thought control. And only via this task can America itself humanize and canalize its technological prowess creatively, instead of being dehumanized and mechanized by it in the sense of Thoreau's "We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us."

Every outlook has its own characteristic issue of moral  
<sup>3</sup> Here to be defined as "stereotypes."

choice. For thoughtful conservatives today, the meaningful moral choice is not between conforming and nonconforming but between conforming to the ephemeral, stereotyped values of the moment and conforming to the ancient, lasting archetypal values shared by all creative cultures.

Archetypes have grown out of the soil of history—slowly, painfully, organically. Stereotypes have been manufactured out of the mechanical processes of mass production—quickly, painlessly, artificially. They have been synthesized in the labs of the entertainment industries and in the blueprints of the social engineers. The philistine conformist and the ostentatious professional nonconformist are alike in being rooted in nothing deeper than the thin topsoil of stereotypes, the stereotypes of Babbitt Senior and Babbitt Junior respectively.

The sudden uprooting of archetypes was the most important consequence of the worldwide industrial revolution. This moral wound, this cultural shock was even more important than the economic consequences of the industrial revolution. Liberty depends on a substratum of fixed archetypes, as opposed to the arbitrary shuffling about of laws and institutions. The distinction holds true whether the shuffling about be done by the apriorist abstract rationalism of the eighteenth century or by the even more inhuman and metallic mass production of the nineteenth century, producing new traumas and new uprootings every time some new mechanized stereotype replaces the preceding one. The contrast between institutions grown organically and those shuffled out of arbitrary rationalist liberalism was summed up by a British librarian on being asked for the French constitution: "Sorry, sir, but we don't keep periodicals."

Every stereotyped society swallows up the diversities of private bailiwicks, private eccentricities, private inner life, and the creativity inherent in concrete personal loyalties and in loving attachments to unique local roots and their rich historical accretions. Apropos the creative potential of local roots, let us recall not only Burke's words on the need for loyalty to one's own "little platoon" but also Synge's words, in the Ireland of 1907, on "the springtime of the local life,"

where the imagination of man is still "fiery and magnificent and tender." The creative imagination of the free artist and free scientist requires private elbowroom, free from the pressure of centralization and the pressure of adjustment to a mass average. This requirement holds true even when the centralization is benevolent and even when the mass average replaces sub-average diversities. Intolerable is the very concept of some busybody benevolence, whether economic, moral, or psychiatric, "curing" all diversity by making it average.

Admittedly certain kinds of diversity are perfectly dreadful; they threaten everything superior and desirable. But at some point the cure to these threats will endanger the superior and the desirable even more than do the threats themselves. The most vicious maladjustments, economic, moral, or psychiatric, will at some point become less dangerous to the free mind than the overadjustment—the stereotyping—needed to cure them.

In the novel and in the poem, the most corrupting stereotype of all is the substitution of good technique for art. What once resulted from the inspired audacity of a heartbreakingly lonely craftsman is now mass-produced in painless, safe, and uninspired capsules. This process is taking over every category of education and literature. The stream of consciousness for which James Joyce wrestled in loneliness with language; the ironic perspective toward society that Proust attained not as entertainment but as tragedy; the quick, slashing insights for which a Virginia Woolf bled out her heart, all these intimate personal achievements of the unstandardized private life are today the standard props of a hundred hack imitators, mechanically vending what is called "the *New Yorker*-type story." Don't underestimate that type of story; though an imitation job, it is imitation with all the magnificent technical skill of America's best-edited weekly. And think of the advantages: no pain any more, no risk any more, no more nonsense of inspiration. Most modern readers are, not even bothered by the difference between such an efficient but bloodless machine job and the living product of individual heart's anguish.

What, then, is the test for telling the coffee from the Nescafé—the true artistic inspiration from the jar of Instant Mùse?

The test is pain. Not mere physical pain but the exultant, transcending pain of selfless sacrifice. The test is that holy pain, that brotherhood of sacrifice, that aristocracy of creative suffering of which Baudelaire wrote, "*Je sais que la douleur est l'unique noblesse.*" In other words, in a free democracy the only justified aristocracy is that of the lonely creative bitterness, the artistically creative scars of the fight for the inner imagination against outer mechanization—the fight for the private life.

## II

Nationalist demagogy, whether McCarthy style or John Birch style, would never have become such a nuisance if liberal intellectuals and New Dealers had earlier made themselves the controlling spearhead of American anti-Communism with the same fervor they showed when spearheading anti-fascism. Only because they defaulted that duty of equal leadership against both kinds of tyranny, only because of the vacuum of leadership created by that default, were the bullies and charlatans enabled partly to fill the vacuum and partly to exploit the cause of anti-Communism. Such had been the thesis of my book *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*—a thesis entirely valid for the postwar. Yalta era of illusions about Communism among the Henry Wallace kind of liberal and New Dealer.

Today that era is long over. It is ironic that Johnny-come-lately anti-Communists like McCarthy and the Birchers did not attack New Dealers until after the latter had got over the pro-Communist illusions that some of them undoubtedly and disastrously had. Today it is no longer in the interest of our two political camps to go on forever with such recriminations of the past. What is to the co-operative interest of both parties is to make sure that both are not replaced (after an intervening Kennedy era) by the "rejoicing third"—some new

movement of nationalist demogogy. Conservatives have no more excuse to refuse to co-operate with liberals and New Dealers against right-wing nationalist threats to our shared liberties than to refuse to co-operate against comparable left-wing threats.

Fortunately, many Burkean new conservatives—Raymond English, Chad Walsh, Thomas Cook, Clinton Rossiter, J. A. Lukacs, August Heckscher, Will Herberg, Reinhold Niebuhr, and other distinguished names—have always been active and effective foes of the thought-control nationalists. Every one of these names achieved a record of all-out, explicit anti-McCarthyism in the days when that demagogue still seemed a danger and when it still took courage, not opportunism, to attack him. The same cannot be said of other, often better-known "new conservatives." They failed the acid test of the McCarthy temptation of the 1950s in the same way that the fellow-traveler kind of liberal failed the acid test of the Communist temptation of the 1930s. Both temptations were not only ethical tests of integrity but also psychological tests of balance and aesthetic tests of good taste.

Apotopos such tests, Clinton Rossiter concludes, in his book *Conservatism in America*, "Unfortunately for the cause of conservatism, Kirk has now begun to sound like a man born one hundred and fifty years too late and in the wrong country." But it is pleasanter to see the positive, not only the negative, in a fellow-writer one esteems. Let us partly overlook Kirk's silence about the McCarthy thought-control menace in Chicago. Let us partly overlook his lack of silence in supporting as so-called "conservatives" the Goldwater Manchester liberals of old-guard Republicanism (as if historic Anglo-American conservatism, with its Disraeli-Churchill-Hughes-Roosevelt tradition of humane social reform, could ever be equated with the robber-baron kind of *laissez-faire* capitalism). Fortunately, Kirk's positive contribution sometimes almost balances such embarrassing ventures into practical national politics. His positive contribution consists of his sensitive, perceptive rediscovery of literary and philosophical

figures like Irving Babbitt and George Santayana for a true humanistic conservatism today.

Even at its best, even when avoiding the traps of right-wing radicalism, the new conservatism is partly guilty of causing the emotional deep-freeze that today makes young people ashamed of generous social impulses. New conservatives point out correctly that in the 1930s many intellectuals wasted generous emotions on unworthy causes, on Communist totalitarianism masked as liberalism. True enough—indeed, a point many of us, as “premature” anti-Communists, were making already in those days. But it does not follow, from recognizing the wrong generousities of the past, that we should today have no generous emotions at all, not even for many obviously worthy causes all around us, such as desegregation. Not only liberals but conservatives like Burke (reread his speeches against the slave trade) and John Adams and John Quincy Adams (among America's first fighters for Negro rights) have fought racism as contradicting our traditional Christian view of man.

The cost of being a genuine Burke-Adams conservative today is that you will be misrepresented in two opposite ways—as being really liberals at heart, hypocritically pretending to be conservatives; as being authoritarian reactionaries at heart, hypocritically pretending to be devoted to civil liberties. So far as the first misrepresentation goes: devotion to civil liberties is not a monopoly of liberals. It is found in liberals and Burkean conservatives alike, as shown in the exchange of letters in their old age between the liberal Thomas Jefferson and his good friend, the conservative John Adams. So far as the second misrepresentation goes: the test of whether a new conservative is sincere about civil liberties or merely a rightest authoritarian is the same as the test of whether any given liberal of the 1930s was sincere about civil liberties or merely a leftist authoritarian. That test (which Senator Goldwater fails) is twofold, involving one question about practice, one question about theory. In practice, does the given conservative or liberal show his devotion to civil liberties in deeds as well as words? In theory, does he show awareness of a law

we may here define as the law of compensatory balance? The law of compensatory balance makes the exposure of Communist fellow-traveling the particular duty of liberals, the exposure of right-wing thought-controllers the particular duty of conservatives.

Here are some further implications of the law of compensatory balance. A traditional monarchy is freest, as in Scandinavia, when anticipating social democracy in humane reforms; an untraditional, centralized mass democracy is freest when encouraging, even to the point of tolerating eccentricity and arrogance, the remnants it possesses of aristocracy, family and regional pride, and decentralized provincial divergences, traditions, privileges. A conservative is most valuable when serving in the more liberal party, a liberal when serving in the more conservative party. Thus the conservative Burke belonged not to the Tory but the Whig Party. Similarly Madison, whose tenth *Federalist* paper helped found and formulate our conservative Constitutional tradition of distrusting direct democracy and majority dictatorship, joined the liberal Jeffersonian party, not the Federalist Party. Reinhold Niebuhr, conservative in his view of history and anti-modernist, anti-liberal in theology, is not a Republican but a New Dealer in political-party activities.

### III

Our distinction between rooted conservatives and rootless, counterrevolutionary doctrinaires is the measure of the difference between two different groups in contemporary America: the humanistic value-conservers and the materialistic old-guard Republicans. The latter are what a wrong and temporary journalistic usage often calls “conservative.” It is more accurate to call them nineteenth-century Manchester liberals with roots no deeper than the relatively recent post-Civil War “gilded age.” Already on May 28, 1903, Winston Churchill denied them and their British counterparts the name of conservatives when he declared in Parliament:

The new fiscal policy [of high tariffs] means a change, not only in the historic English parties but in the conditions of our public life. The old Conservative Party with its religious convictions and constitutional principles will disappear and a new party will arise . . . like perhaps the Republican Party in the United States of America . . . rigid, materialist and secular, whose opinions will turn on tariffs and who will cause the lobbies to be crowded with the touts of protected industries.

The Churchill quotation applies well to Senator Goldwater today. This charming and personable orator is a *laissez-faire* Manchester liberal when humane social reforms are at stake. But, as is Churchill in the above quotation, he is ready to make an exception against *laissez-faire* when protection of privileged industry is involved. The Burkean conservative today cherishes New Deal reforms in economics and Lockean parliamentary liberalism in politics, as traditions that are here to stay. Indeed, it is not the least of the functions of the new conservatism to force a now middle-aged New Deal to realize that it has become conservative and rooted, and that therefore it had better stop parroting the anti-Constitutional, anti-traditional slogans of its youth. These slogans are now being practiced instead, and to a wider extent than even the most extreme New Deal liberal ever envisaged, by the Republican radicals of the right, with their wild-eyed schemes for impeaching Justice Warren or abolishing taxes.

The best-rooted philosophical conservatives in America derive from the anti-material-progress tradition of Melville and Irving Babbitt; they are found mainly in the literary and educational world, the creative world at its best, the non-political world. Politics will not be ready for their ideas for another generation; they should shed their illusions on that score. The normal time lag of a generation likewise separated the literary and university origin of Coleridge's conservatism from its osmosis into the politics of Disraeli Toryism.

Sir Henry Maine (1822-1888), one of the world's leading authorities on constitutions, called America's Constitution

the most successful conservative bulwark in history against majority tyranny and mass radicalism and on behalf of traditional liberties and continuity of framework. Later scholars like Louis Hartz prefer to derive our free heritage not from the Burkean and Federalist ideas of Adams and the Constitution but from eighteenth-century Lockean liberalism. Both sides are partly right and need not exclude each other. For Locke's liberalism is a relatively moderate and tradition-respecting brand when compared with the Continental, anti-traditional liberalism of Rousseau, not to mention the Jacobins. So we come full circle in America's political paradox; our conservatism, in the absence of medieval feudal relics, must grudgingly admit it has little real tradition to conserve except that of liberalism—which then turns out to be a relatively conservative liberalism.

The need for new conservatives to maintain continuity also with well-rooted liberal traditions does not mean conservatism and liberalism are the same. Their contrast may be partly and briefly defined<sup>4</sup> as the tragic cyclical view of man, based on a political secularization of original sin, versus the optimistic faith in the natural goodness of man and mass and the inevitability of linear progress. In Coleridgean terms, conservatism is the concrete organic growth of institutions, as if they were trees, while rationalist liberalism is an abstract, mechanical moving around of institutions as if they were separate pieces of furniture. Conservatism serves "growingness" and moves inarticulately and traditionally, like the seasons; liberalism serves "progress" and moves consciously and systematically, like geometry. The former is a circle, the latter an ever-advancing straight line. Both are equally needed half truths; both are equally inherent in the human condition, liberalism on a more rational level and conservatism on a perhaps deeper level. It may be generalized that the conserva-

<sup>4</sup> Longer, more complete definition, with all the needed specific examples in political and intellectual life, is attempted in the first three chapters of the present writer's Anvil paperback, *Conservatism from John Adams to Churchill* (Van Nostrand Company, Princeton, 1956).

tive mind does not like to generalize. Conservative theory is anti-theoretical. The liberal and rationalist mind consciously articulates abstract blueprints; the conservative mind unconsciously incarnates concrete traditions. Liberal formulas define freedom; conservative traditions embody it.

Even while philosophical conservatives support liberals in day-to-day measures of social humaneness or of Constitutional liberties against rightist or leftist radicals, the above basic contrast between the two temperaments will always remain. For these contrasts are symbolized by contrasting spokesmen in our history. George Washington, John Adams, and the Federalists are not the same as apriorist egalitarians like Paine, or believers in natural goodness like Jefferson. John Calhoun is not the same as Andrew Jackson. Barrett Wendell, Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More are not the same as the spokesmen of our liberal weeklies or of the *New York Post*. Charles Evans Hughes is not the same as La Follette or even Woodrow Wilson. No, the need for conservative continuity with America's institutionalized liberal past does not mean identity with liberalism, least of all with optimism about human nature, or utilitarian overemphasis on material progress, or trust in the direct democracy of the masses. Instead, conservative continuity with our liberal past simply means that you cannot escape from history; history has provided America with a shared liberal-conservative base more liberal than European Continental conservatives, more conservative than European Continental liberals.

This shared liberal-conservative base is a rooted reality, not a rightist nostalgia for roots, and from it grows the core of the New Deal and of the Kennedy program, as opposed to the inorganic, mechanical abstractions of either a Karl Marx or an Adam Smith. So let new conservatives stop becoming what they accuse liberals of being—rootless doctrinaires.

#### IV

When asked by President Teddy Roosevelt what the justification was of Austria's supposedly outdated monarchy, the

old Hapsburg emperor Francis Joseph replied, "To protect my peoples from their governments." Similarly Disraeli—like Lord Bolingbroke of the early eighteenth century—defended the Crown and the Established Church as bulwarks of the people's rights against ephemeral politicians. The throne, whether Hapsburg or British, serves to moderate excesses of nationalistic or economic pressure groups against individual rights. In non-monarchic America, this same indispensable protection of liberty against the mob tyranny of transient majorities is performed by the Supreme Court, that similarly hallowed and aloof inheritor of the monarchic aura.

So conservatism fights on two fronts. It fights the atomistic disunity of unregulated capitalism. It fights the merely bureaucratic, merely mechanical unity of modern Socialism. It fights both for the sake of organic unity—but thereby runs the risk of creating a third threat of its own. For within its organic unity lies the totalitarian threat whenever the free individual is sacrificed totally and without guarantees (instead of partly and with constitutional guarantees) to that unity. Such a total sacrifice of individual to society took place in German romanticism; organic unity there became an anti-individual cult of the folk-state (*Volk*). This cult took place already in the nineteenth century. It not only unbalanced German conservatism toward extreme statism (via Hegel) but unwittingly prepared the German people psychologically for Hitler's gangster unity.

The proper conservative balance between individual diversity and organic social unity has been best formulated by Coleridge, in 1831:

The difference between an inorganic and an organic body lies in this: in the first—a sheaf of corn—the whole is nothing more than a collection of the individual parts or phenomena. In the second—a man—the whole is everything and the parts are nothing. A State is an idea intermediate between the two, the whole being a result from, and not a mere total of, the parts,—and yet not so

merging the constituent parts in the result, but that the individual exists integrally within it.

Coleridgean conservatism, the height of the conservative philosophy, lies in the above intermediate "and yet," which saves the "individual integrally" while linking him organically. The folk romanticism of Germany and the "Third Rome" heritage of czarist Russia upset that balance in favor of "the whole is everything" and the parts nothing," thereby paving the way for Nazism and Communism respectively. On the opposite extreme, America upset that Coleridgean balance in favor of "the whole is nothing." ("a sheaf of corn")—after the chaotic robber-baron individualists emerged as the real victors of the Civil War. So the proper rebalancing ("intermediate between the two") would promote an almost exaggerated individualism in Germany and Russia and an almost exaggerated "socialistic" or New Deal unity in America, not for its own sake but to even the scales.

Therefore in America it is often the free trade unions who unconsciously are our ablest representatives of the word they hate and misunderstand—conservatism. The organic unity they restore to the atomized "proletariat" is the providential Coleridgean "intermediate" between doctrinaire capitalism and doctrinaire Socialism. In the words of Frank Tannenbaum in *A Philosophy of Labor*, 1952:

Trade unionism is the conservative movement of our time. It is the counter-revolution. Unwittingly, it has turned its back upon most of the political and economic ideas that have nourished western Europe and the United States during the last two centuries. In practice, though not in words, it denies the heritage that stems from the French Revolution and from English liberalism. It is also a complete repudiation of Marxism. . . .

In contrast with [Communism, Fascism, and *laissez-faire* capitalism] the trade union has involved a clustering of men about their work. This fusion [the new, medieval-style organic society] has been going on for a long time. It has been largely unplanned. . . . There is a

"great tradition of humanism and compassion in European and American politics, philosophy, and law, which counters, at first ineffectively, the driving forces operating for the atomization of society and the isolation of man. That tradition in England includes such names as Cobbett, Shaftesbury, Romilly, Dickens, Byron, Coleridge, Carlyle, Ruskin, Charles Kingsley. . . . The trade union is the real alternative to the authoritarian state. The trade union is our modern "society," the only true society that industrialism has fostered. As a true society it is concerned with the whole man, and embodies the possibilities of both the freedom and the security essential to human dignity.

This Tannenbaum passage is both conservative and new. Yet it would fill with horror the Kirk-Goldwater kind of mind that today claims to speak for "the new conservatism." Such horror is not an argument against Tannenbaum nor against a new conservatism. It is an argument against the misuse of language. And it is an argument against that old-guard wing of the Republican Party which has yet to learn the anti-rightist warning spoken in 1790 by the conservative Burke: "A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation."

What about the argument (very sincerely believed by the *National Review* and old-guard Republicans) that denies the label "conservative" to those of us who support trade unionism and who selectively support many New Deal reforms? According to this argument, our support of such humane and revolution-preventing reforms in politics—by New Dealers and democratic Socialists—makes us indistinguishable in philosophy from New Dealers and democratic Socialists. Similarly our support of the liberal position on civil liberties in politics supposedly makes us indistinguishable from liberals in philosophy. Shall we then cease to call ourselves philosophical conservatives, despite our conservative view of history and human nature?

The answer is: Children, don't oversimplify, don't pigeon-

hole; allow for pluralistic overlappings that defy abstract blueprints and labels. Trade unionists, (and some of the new humanistic, non-statist Socialists that are evolving in England and West Germany) may be what Frank Tannenbaum calls "the conservative counter-revolution" despite themselves (a neo-medieval organic society) and against their own conscious intentions. Meanwhile, self-styled conservatives are often unconscious anarchic wreckers and uprooters (from the French O.A.S. to America's second generation of campus neo-McCarthyites). Moreover, the same social reform in politics may be supported for very different philosophical reasons. To cite an old example newly relevant today, the support of the workingman's right to vote and right to strike by both the Chartists and the Tory Disraeli merely means that some support a reform as a first step to mass revolution while others support the same reform to woo the masses away from revolution and to give them a sense of belongingness by changing them from masses to individuals.

Finally, there is the distinction between what is done and how it is done. This distinction differentiates the conservative from the democratic Socialist and from the New Deal bureaucrat even when they all vote the same ticket (as so many of us could not help but do, given the Republican alternative, in the case of Roosevelt, Stevenson, and Kennedy). This distinction, this clarification of the proper use of "conservative," is found in an important and much-discussed essay by August Heckscher, at that time the chief editorial writer of the New York *Herald Tribune* and in 1962 appointed President Kennedy's Consultant for Cultural Affairs. Writing in the Harvard magazine *Confluence* in September, 1953, Mr. Heckscher said:

The failure to understand the true nature of conservatism has made political campaigns in the United States signally barren of intellectual content. In debate it is difficult at best to admit that you would do the same thing as the opposition, but in a different way. Yet the spirit in which things are done really does make a dif-

ference, and can distinguish a sound policy from an unsound one. Social reforms can be undertaken with the effect of draining away local energies, reducing the citizenry to an undifferentiated mass, and binding it to the shackles of the all-powerful state. Or they can be undertaken with the effect of strengthening the free citizen's stake in society. The ends are different. The means will be also, if men have the wit to distinguish between legislation which encourages voluntary participation and legislation which involves reckless spending and enlargement of the federal bureaucracy.

It is easy to say that such distinctions are not important. A conservative intellectual like Peter Viereck is constantly challenged, for example, because in a book like *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals* he supports a political program not dissimilar in its outlines from that which was achieved during twenty years of social renovation under the Democrats. But the way reforms are undertaken is actually crucial. Concern for the individual, reluctance to have the central government perform what can be done as well by the state or to have the public perform what can be done as well by private enterprise—these priorities involve values. And such values (upheld by writers like Mr. Viereck) are at the heart of modern conservatism. . . . So conservatism at best remains deeper and more pervasive than any party, and a party that does claim it exclusively is likely to deform and exploit it for its own purposes.

In conclusion, let us broaden the discussion from America into certain worldwide considerations about the nature of despotism. They are considerations about which all men of good will can agree as a strategy of freedom, whether New Deal social democrats or Manchester-liberal Republicans or Burkean conservatives. If there is no such agreement, then the epitaph on the tombstone of freedom may appropriately be these lines of Yeats:

Things fall apart; the center cannot hold. . . .  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

According to the neo-Stalinist wing in Russia today, almost all intellectuals and reformers are secret agents of western capitalism. According to the right wing today in America, almost all intellectuals and reformers are secret agents of eastern Communism. Mirror images, of course. And wrong twice. Each mirror image needs the other and reflects on the other. They need each other as bogeymen: They reflect on each other because each leftist extreme frightens waverers into the rightist camp; each rightist extreme frightens waverers into the leftist camp. McCarthyism used to frighten European liberals into being fellow-travelers with Communism. Communism frightens American conservatives into being fellow-travelers with the pseudo-conservative nationalist thought controllers.

Neither mirror image is strong enough to destroy freedom by itself. Freedom is destroyed when both attack at the same time. Lenin was able to seize power in November, 1917, only because the new Duma government had been weakened by right-wing authoritarians, the John Birchers of Russia, who slandered it as "Red" and who had undermined it by the Kornilov Putsch in September. Hitler was able to seize power in 1933 only because the Weimar Republic had been weakened by Communist authoritarians, who slandered it as "Social Fascist" and who had undermined it by postwar Putsches. In 1962 in France, the anti-dé Gaulle Communists and the O.A.S. rightists are examples of the same process in our own time. So are the Gizenga leftists and Tshombe rightists in the Congo.

In both Congo and California, in France today as in Kerevsky's Russia yesterday, the fellow-traveler left and the thought-control right are still needing each other and feeding each other, as against the center. Meanwhile in every country the Burke-style conservatives, who revere a rooted constitution, and the Mill-style liberals, who revere civil liberties, likewise need each other: to unite against what Metetrnich

called "the white radicals" of the right as well as the red radicals. Hence this slogan to end all slogans: "LIBERTARIANS OF THE WORLD, UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT ABSTRACTIONS. YOU HAVE A WORLD TO CHAIN."

Liberties versus "liberty." Concrete liberties, preserved by the chains of ethics, versus abstract liberty-in-quotes, betrayed by messianic sloganizing, betrayed into the far grimmer chains of totalitarianism. "Man was born free" (said Rousseau, with his faith in the natural goodness of man) "but is everywhere in chains." "In chains, and so he ought to be," replies the thoughtful conservative, defending the good and wise and necessary chains of rooted tradition and historic continuity, upon which depend the civil liberties, the shared civil liberties of modern liberals and conservatives, and parliamentary monarchists, and democratic Socialists. Without the chaos-chaining, the id-chaining heritage of rooted values, what is to keep man from becoming Eichmann or Nechayev—what is to save freedom from "freedom?"