Willmoore Kendall

By any reasonable standard of measurement, as Professor Jeffrey Hart in 1971 noted, Willmoore Kendall remains "the most important political theorist to have emerged in the twenty-odd years since the end of World War II."[1] Moreover, as regards the American political tradition, it can be argued that Kendall is the most original, innovative, and challenging interpreter of any period. Born in Oklahoma in 1909, Kendall received his undergraduate degree from the University of Oklahoma (B.A., 1927), and his graduate degrees from Northwestern University (M.A., 1928), Oxford University (B.A., 1935; M.A., 1938), which he attended as a Rhodes Scholar, and the University of Illinois (Ph.D., 1941). Kendall taught at various universities, including fourteen years at Yale. At the time of his death in 1967, he was Chairman of the Department of Politics and Economics at the University of Dallas. Kendall was a prime mover in the American conservative movement. His major works include *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule* (1941), *The Conservative Affirmation* (1963), *The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition* (1970), and *Willmoore Kendall Contra Mundum* (1971). Among his more prominent students were William F. Buckley, Jr. and Professor George W. Carey.

I

With his penchant for political basics and fundamentals, coupled with his keen interest in the American experience, it is not surprising that Willmoore Kendall was drawn to a study of John

Locke. John Locke invariably is considered the central figure of the American political tradition. Indeed, when speaking of the American experience we often speak of the "Lockean tradition" or the "Lockean heritage," and every schoolboy knows (or is supposed to know) that Thomas Jefferson, the patron saint of American democracy, borrowed extravagantly from Locke in drafting the Declaration of Independence, considered by conventional wisdom the most authoritative and eloquent statement of the theoretical foundations of the American tradition.

Kendall's classic work is perhaps *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule*. In the world of political philosophy, Kendall was the inveterate dissenter from "accepted interpretations," and this book is part of the legacy. Kendall contended that the conventional interpretation of Locke, depicting him as an exponent of individualism and natural rights that transcended majority sentiments, was in error. Why had conventional scholarship on Locke been in error? According to Kendall, it was "an illustration of what happens when scholars abdicate responsibility for reading the books they criticize."[2] To put it otherwise (in one of Kendall's favorite phrases): "[T]he thesis of the present study is precisely that Locke did not say the things he is supposed to have said. . . ."[3]

In the tradition of Leo Strauss, Kendall insisted on reading the original materials and the "universal confrontation of the text." In Kendall's words, this approach "demands, in principle at least, that we accept no sentence or paragraph from the *Second Treatise* as Locke's 'teaching' without first laying it beside every other sentence in the treatise, and attempt to face any problem, regarding the interpretation of that sentence or paragraph, posed by the presence within the text of those other sentences."[4] Kendall contended that conventional Lockean interpreters had operated upon the invalid assumption that the *Second Treatise* "will yield up its meaning to a hasty reader," whereas in fact he insisted the Second Treatise was "a book that wants months and months, or even years and years, of poring over."[5] After close textual analysis of this classic, Kendall challenged the conventional interpretation of Locke. Rather than a thinker wedded to notions of transcendent

abstract natural rights and discrete individualism, Kendall found an exponent of absolute majoritarianism who contended that the individual had only those rights that society, through the political majority, wished to bestow upon him. The nature and form of those rights will depend upon social needs as defined by society. Thus individual rights are functional and changeable, not transcendent and absolute.

Kendall argued that Locke's state of nature was expository, not historical.[6] He expressly accepted G. E. G. Catlin's observation that

> It is irrelevant to enter into a full discussion of how far the theorists of social contract ever thought of the contract as having taken place at any historical epoch. A study of these writers would seem to lead to the conclusion that . . . they were never guilty of this *naivete*[7]

Kendall wrote, "[F]or Locke the law of nature and the law of reason are the same thing," and he noted Locke's statement that "no *rational* creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse"; therefore, Kendall concluded, "The [Lockean] law of nature is, in short, a law which commands its subjects to look well to their own interests."[8] With Kendall's Locke, in pursuing its perceived interests through reason, society will define the rights, duties, and obligations of the individual. In this regard, society is antecedent to and controlling over any claimed inalienable or transcendent rights of the individual. Kendall found the following representative quotation from the *Second Treatise* unequivocal:

> To conclude, the power that every individual gave the society when he entered into it can never revert to the individuals again as long as the society lasts, but will always remain in the community, because without this there can be no community, no commonwealth. . . .[9]

Kendall's Locke not only rejected any notion that individuals have rights superior to society's demands, but in addition embraced majoritarianism as the means by which society should or-

der and express its interests and desires. Kendall found the following statements from the *Second Treatise* clear and unmistakable:

> When any number of men have so consented to make one community or government, they are thereby presently incorporated and make one body politic *wherein the majority have a right to act and conclude the rest.*
>
> For when any number of men have, by the consent of every individual, made a community, they have thereby made that community one body, with a power to act as one body, *which is only by the will and determination of the majority* . . . , and it being necessary to that which is one body to move one way, it is necessary the body should move that way whither the greater force carries it, which is *the consent of the majority,* or else it is impossible it should act or continue one body, one community, which the consent of every individual that united into it agreed that it should; and so every one is bound by that consent to be *concluded by the majority.* And therefore we see that in assemblies impowered to act by positive laws, where no number is set by that positive law which improves them, *the act of the majority passes for the act of the whole* and, of course, determines, as having by the law of nature and reason the power of the whole.[10]

In sum, Kendall's Locke turned out to be the majority-rule democrat, and the majority had *unlimited* political power. Although not obligated under any notions of inalienable individual rights, is there any guarantee that Locke's majority will be respectful in some form of the individual integrity of the person? In the final chapter of *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule,* Kendall discusses Locke's "latent premise," by which Kendall meant that with effort one can tease out of the *Second Treatise* some evidence of limits upon majoritarian action; however, Kendall cautioned that Locke never fully developed the point, and he called Locke's failure to deal in depth with this central issue the "capital weakness" of the *Second Treatise.*[11]

Throughout the *Second Treatise,* Locke offered such limitations on governmental action as "reason and common equity," "the public good," and the avoidance of "absolute arbitrary power" or "tyranny."[12] Similarly, Locke concluded, "It [the legislative] is a power that has no other end but preservation, and therefore can never have a right to destroy, enslave, or designedly to impoverish the subjects."[13] In these cases it is essential to understand that Locke was referring to limitations placed upon *governmental* institutions, such as the legislature or the executive, and not upon "the people." In the *Second Treatise,* "the people" as a whole is the ultimate and "supreme power," and *everything* else is subordinate.[14] In Locke's words, "Who shall be judge whether the prince or legislative act contrary to their trust. . . . To this I reply: The people shall be judge. . . ."[15] Lest there be any lingering doubt, Locke put the matter unequivocally in the final sentence of the *Second Treatise:*

> But if they have set limits to the duration of their legislative and made this supreme power in any person or assembly only temporary, or else when by the miscarriages of those in authority it is forfeited, upon the forfeiture, or at the determination of the time set, it reverts to the society, and the people have a right to act as *supreme* and continue the legislative in themselves, or erect a new form, or under the old form place it in new hands, *as they think good.*[16]

Furthermore, on the ultimate matter of revolution, in Locke of the *Second Treatise,* it was not individuals flaunting abstract rights who were granted the right of revolting. In Locke's words, "But if a long train of abuses, prevarications, and artifices, all tending the same way, make the design visible to *the people,* and *they* cannot but feel what *they* lie under and see whither *they* are going, it is not to be wondered that *they* should then rouse themselves and endeavor to put the rule into such hands which may secure to *them* the ends for which government was at first erected . . . ."[17] How do "the people" express their preferences in the mat-

ter? We are back to majoritarianism, for as Locke wrote, "Nor let anyone think this lays a perpetual foundation for disorder; for this operates not till the inconvenience is so great that *the majority feel it* and are weary of it and find a necessity to have it amended"[18]

It was Kendall's contention in his discussion of the "latent premise" that having placed ultimate power in the majority will of the people, Locke did not give explicit guidelines as to what shall limit the majority in exercising its power. That is, individuals and governmental institutions are limited, but what prevents the majority with unlimited power from trampling on the rights of individuals or minorities? In the *Second Treatise* there are no express limitations, according to Kendall, there is only the "latent premise" that the majority is "rational and just."[19]

Kendall published no article on Locke between 1941, the publication date of *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule,* and 1966, when his article "John Locke Revisited" appeared in *The Intercollegiate Review.*[20] In this article, which is among the most intensely reasoned and intellectually challenging he has written, Kendall re-evaluated his positions on Locke. Kendall adhered to the basic thesis of his earlier work that Locke is not the abstract natural rights theorist of conventional wisdom, but rather is a "majority-rule authoritarian." In Kendall's words, "I find in Locke. . . no limit on the power of the majority to set up any form of government that meets its fancy, and thereby to withdraw any and every supposed individual right."[21] On this crucial point the Kendall of 1966 stands firmly with the Kendall of 1941.

Regarding the problem of "the latent premise," Kendall reversed his position on this matter, and admitted his "embarrassment" at having proposed this premise in his earlier work.[22] Kendall rejected the "latent-premise" argument that the majority can be counted on to respect individual natural rights and absolute standards of morality because it is "rational and just." He contended that the "latent premise" is simply not in the *Second Treatise,* and "is produced out of thin air, and *attributed* to Locke in a fashion that can only be called wholly gratuitous."[23] In his

analysis of the text, the Kendall of 1966 refused to *read into* the text something that is not there solely for the purpose of giving a "sympathetic" treatment to an author in trouble. Thus by dropping the "latent-premise" contention of natural political virtue in the majority, the Kendall of 1966 sealed permanently Locke's fate as a majority-rule authoritarian, who placed no restrictions on majority will.

The Kendall of 1966 went beyond the Kendall of 1941 and expressly put Locke in the camp of the enemies of the great tradition of politics—in the camp of Machiavelli and Hobbes.[24] Kendall concluded that Locke is a progenitor of modern ideology and not of the enduring tradition of political philosophy. This results from Locke's basic premise in the *Second Treatise* that man "is willing to join in society with others who are already united, or have a mind to unite, for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties, and estates, which I call by the general name 'property.' The great and chief end, therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property."[25] It is the "right of self-preservation," then, that is at the center of Lockean thought. With this "right of self-preservation" being the first principle of Locke's political science, it naturally follows, Kendall argued, that consent alone becomes the basis of governmental legitimacy. That is, man owes no binding *obligation* or *duty* to anyone or anything, for the *right* of self-preservaton is the center and measure of all things political, and society will express and advance this right collectively through unlimited majoritarianism. Kendall contended that this Lockean philosophy contributed to the birth of modern ideology and the death of the normative tradition of political philosophy, which had made rights correlative to duties. Modern ideology knows nothing of duties, morality, ethics, and obligations; it knows only of the "right of self-preservation," and thereby it is at odds with the biblical and great traditions in political philosophy. This was Kendall's final analysis of Locke; he died a year after the important 1966 article was published.

John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule is generally

considered a classic in the literature on Locke. It is invariably cited in any discussion on Locke and in any bibliography relating to him. Kendall's view of Locke as absolute majoritarian was unique and clearly at odds with conventional interpretations which pictured Locke as master exponent of the inalienable natural rights of the individual. Kendall's thesis, although always cited, is generally ignored by writers on political thought. The well-known texts of George Sabine and William Ebenstein are typical. Sabine wrote:

> Locke set up a body of innate, indefeasible, individual rights which limit the competence of the community and stand as bars to prevent interference with the liberty and property of private persons. . . .The foundation of the whole [Lockean] system was represented as being the individual and his rights, especially that of property. On the whole this must be regarded as the most significant phase of his political theory, which made it primarily a defense of individual liberty against political oppression.[26]

Similarly, Ebenstein stated, "The text of the Declaration [of Independence] is pure Locke, and the main elements of the American constitutional system—limited government, inalienable individual's rights, inviolability of property all directly traceable to Locke."[27]

Sabine and Ebenstein cited Kendall in their bibliographies; however, and this is the crucial point, they did not accept or refute Kendall—they simply ignored him. In that everyone concedes *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule* is a classic among works on Locke, this is a troublesome point for students of political philosophy, and it deeply concerned Kendall. In his 1966 article on Locke he wrote:

> Judging from. . .the 'mainstream' of political theory scholarship, Kendall's 1941 Locke [has not] had any perceptible impact on the mine-run political theory scholars. The latter's general practice would seem to be either first, to ignore

> [Kendall's Locke] altogether, or second, to mention [him] *en passant*, . . . but never, third, to enter into public debate with [him][28]

Kendall observed, "I conclude that the political theory profession is suffering from a mortal sickness."[29]

Kendall has a valid point. It is difficult to explain why an admittedly classic and seminal work and the substantive ideas it offered would be cited but ignored. To accept or refute would be permissible but to ignore is mystifying. Kendall was not protesting an imagined slight upon himself; rather, he was questioning why a glacial freeze should make the profession of political theory impervious to serious innovation.[30] Kendall was warning that the study of political philosophy may have succumbed to ideology, and that the inertia of ideology had left us only with ancient symbols which we are expected to accept without challenge. In particular, Locke is the ideological symbol of individualism and abstract natural rights, and the raising of points to the contrary is declared out of order. As to the validity of Kendall's thesis, it does challenge anyone to read with care the *Second Treatise* and conclude that it stands as the supreme call for individualism and abstract natural rights. It simply will not yield up that conclusion. At most, the *Second Treatise* presents a mixed picture of individualism and majoritarianism, but to find natural-rights individualism as anterior to and transcending society, government, and the majority will is to base conclusions on ideological assumption and not on careful textual analysis.

II

The related problems of "the public orthodoxy" and "the open society" were major concerns of Kendall throughout his professional career. In the reappraisal of 1941, Kendall's Locke emerged as an exponent of the public orthodoxy as expressed through the majority. As Kendall sees it, in Lockean thought, "In consenting to be a member of a commonwealth, therefore, he [the individual] consents beforehand to the acceptance of obligations which

he does not approve, and it is right that he should do so because such an obligation is *implicit in the nature of community life.*"[31] Throughout *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule,* the reader can discern Kendall's deep skepticism about constructing an ongoing political system on the foundations of abstract natural-rights individualism; to attempt to do so would be unnatural, contrary to the realities of human nature and the human condition.

In Kendall's political science, the public orthodoxy is a "way of life," identical with the Greek *politeia,* which refers to "the 'character' or tone of the community."[32] More particularly, the public orthodoxy is

> [T]hat matrix of convictions, usually enshrined in custom and "folkways," often articulated formally and solemnly in charter and constitution, occasionally summed up in the creed of a church or the testament of a philosopher, that makes a society The Thing it is and that divides it from other societies as, in human thought, one thing is divided always from another.
>
> That is why we may (and do) speak intelligibly of a Greek and Roman, or an American "way of life."[33]

From Kendall's perspective, "the existence of the *politeia* [i.e., the public orthodoxy] is the unquestioned point of departure for political philosophy," for it is the primordial fact of social and political existence.[34] The public orthodoxy is antecedent to all other political matters:

> Not only can society not avoid having a public orthodoxy; even when it rejects an old orthodoxy in the name of "enlightenment," "progress," "the pluralist society," "the open society," and the like, it invents, however subtly, a new orthodoxy with which to replace the old one. As Aristotle is always at hand to remind us, only gods and beasts can live alone—man, by nature, is a political animal—whose very political life demands a *politeia* that involves an at least implicit code of manners and a tacit agreement on the meaning of man within the total economy of existence. Without this political orthodoxy . . . the state withers; contracts lose their efficacy; the moral bond between citizens is loosened; the State opens itself to enemies from abroad; and the *politeia* sheds the sacral character without which it cannot long endure.[35]

Since the state is founded upon the public orthodoxy, if the orthodoxy decays and disintegrates, the state itself will inevitably falter. It is an unyielding reality: The good and health of the political state are dependent upon the vitality and character of the public orthodoxy. In Kendall's political theory, not only is the public orthodoxy inescapably rooted in the order of being, but it is a positive good. Without it there is no society, no state, and civilized man, as we traditionally know him, is destroyed.

Kendall was strongly at odds with the dogmatic proponents of the "open society," who seemed to be contending that all public orthodoxies are evil—except, of course, the public orthodoxy that there are no public orthodoxies. One of Kendall's principal *bêtes noires* was John Stuart Mill, who was leading, as Kendall saw it, the attack of the open-society proponents on the concept of the public orthodoxy.[36] In his analysis of *On Liberty,* Kendall concluded that Mill was in fact an absolutist on the matter of freedom of expression. It is true that Mill made certain concessions on such matters as libel and slander, situations where children were involved, and incitement to crime; however, once these peripheral matters were conceded, Mill assumed an absolutist and dogmatic posture on the question of freedom of expression. Kendall considered the following representative quotations from *On Liberty* as dispelling any possible doubt on the matter:

> Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough; there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling, against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on

> those who dissent from them. [In short, the prevailing public orthodoxy is by definition "tyranny" and must be displaced.]
>
> This, then, is the appropriate region of human liberty. It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness, demanding liberty of conscience in the *most comprehensive sense*, liberty of thought and feeling, *absolute freedom of opinion* and sentiment on *all subjects*, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological.... No society...is completely free in which [these liberties] do not exist *absolute* and *unqualified*.[37]

Mill was unequivocal that his call for "absolute freedom of opinion" included freedom of thought, speaking, and writing.[38] It was Mill's unrelenting disdain for the public orthodoxy or, as he called it, "the despotism of custom" that led him to make his best-known remark: "If all mankind were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing all mankind."[39]

Kendall rejected categorically Mill's absolutist position on the "open society," and he repudiated its theoretical underpinnings. Hardly less than Machiavelli, and more than Hobbes, Mill is in full rebellion against both religion and philosophy, and so in full rebellion also against the traditional society that embodies them.[40] Kendall charged that Mill's position is at odds with elementary facts of the human condition. It is unnatural and perverse to ask mortal men to accept a posture of absolute relativism, for in fact men do have values, in fact they do think some questions are settled, and they do not accept the position that all points of view are relative and equal in value. Kendall contended Mill erred in proposing that any society should and would make absolute freedom of expression its supreme and only value:

> Mill's proposals have as one of their tacit premises a false conception of the nature of society, and are, therefore, unrealistic on their face. They assume that society is, so to speak, *a debating club* devoted above all to the pursuit of truth, and capable therefore of subordinating itself—and all other considerations, goods, and goals—to that pursuit.... But we know only too well that society is *not* a debating club—all our experience of society drives the point home—and that, even if it were one...the chances of its adopting the pursuit of truth as its supreme good are negligible. Societies ...cherish a whole series of goods among others, their own self-preservation, the *living* of the truth they believe themselves to embody already, and the communication of that truth (pretty much intact, moreover) to future generations, their religion, etc.—which they are not only likely to value as much as or more than the pursuit of truth, but *ought* to value as much as or more than the pursuit of truth, because these are *preconditions* of the pursuit of truth.[41]

As Kendall viewed it, Mill failed to understand that the *politeia* is the condition precedent to society, and that it is only within the frame of reference or consensus established by the *politeia* that debate, or discussion as Kendall would prefer to call it, can take place. To deny the *politeia,* and to ask for unlimited debate in the abstract as Mill does, is to request what is not only impossible of achievement—human nature and the human condition dictate otherwise—but indeed, even if attainable, would be undesirable:

> For the essence of Mill's freedom of speech is the divorce of the right to speak from the duties correlative to the right; the right to speak is a right to speak *ad nauseam,* and with impunity. It is shot through and through with the egalitarian overtones of the French Revolution, which are as different from the measured aristocratic overtones of the pursuit of truth by discussion, as understood by the tradition Mill was attacking, as philosophy is different from phosphorus.[42]

If the doctrine of Mill is the right to speak *ad nauseam,* without correlative duties or obligations, we are installing the cult of

individual eccentricity as our supreme value; if this is followed to its logical and final conclusion, society will be brought to the brink of disintegration. Mill was an advocate of the cult of individual eccentricity. "In this age, the mere example of nonconformity," he wrote, "the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric.... That so few now dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the time."[43]

In Mill's "open society," the individual with his absolute right of expression is then instructed that eccentricity is a positive good and that there is a duty to pursue it. That is, there emerges a public orthodoxy of eccentricity and, in Kendall's critique, this will drive individuals to the making of exorbitant and impossible demands upon society. This in turn will lead to confrontation and the disintegration of society, for there is no center that can hold; more importantly, there is no obligation or duty for anybody to have since all things political are conceived wholly in terms of individual rights and demands. Into the vacuum created by disintegration will move force and coercion—in a word, tyranny. As Kendall succinctly put it, "I next contend that such a society as Mill prescribed will descend ineluctably into ever-deepening *differences of opinion,* into progressive breakdown of those common premises upon which alone a society can conduct its affairs by discussion, and so into the abandonment of the discussion process and the arbitrament of public questions by violence and civil war."[44] Kendall queried, "[I]s there any surer prescription for arriving, willy nilly, in spite of ourselves, at the closed society, than is involved in current pleas for the open society?"[45] And he answered: "By asking for all, even assuming that all to be desirable, we imperil our chances of getting that little we might have got had we asked only for that little."[46]

Inexorably, then, Kendall argued, Mill's position of dogmatic relativism leads to the emergence of the coercive state. Kendall reasoned, "The proposition that all opinions are equally—and

hence infinitely—valuable, said to be the unavoidable inference from the proposition that all opinions are equal, is only—and perhaps the less likely—of two possible inferences, the other being: All opinions are equally—and hence infinitely—without value, so what difference does it make if one, particularly one not our own, gets suppressed?"[47] He concluded with this admonition: "We have no experience of unlimited freedom of speech as Mill defines it, of the open society as [Karl] Popper defines it, unless, after a fashion and for a brief moment, in Weimar Germany—an experience no organized society will be eager to repeat."[48]

Kendall accused the "open-society" proponents, such as John Stuart Mill and Karl Popper, of presenting us with false choices. That is, they force us to choose between the "closed" or the "open" society. As Popper stated it, "We can return to the beasts [meaning the closed society]. But if we wish to remain human, then there is *only one way,* the way into the open society."[49] Kendall challenged that assumption:

> Mill would have us choose between never silencing and declaring ourselves infallible, as Popper would have us believe that a society cannot be a little bit closed, any more than a woman can be a little bit pregnant. All our knowledge of politics bids us not to fall into that trap. Nobody wants all-out thought-control or the closed society; and nobody has any business pretending that somebody else wants them. For the real question is, how open can a society be and still remain open at all?[50]

To Kendall choices between the "open society" and "closed society" are false choices; indeed, they are not our only alternatives. In the real world of being there is "an infinite range of possibilities." The great irony is that by offering these false choices, proponents of the open society actually nudge us closer to the closed society. Because the attainment of a completely open society is impossible, and undesirable to boot, the advocates of the open society, by their own process of elimination, leave us with no other alternative than that of the closed society, which unfortu-

nately is attainable. It was Kendall's contention that political philosophers should be seeking realistic and moderate solutions in that "infinite range of possibilities" lying between those purist concepts of the open and closed societies, which political ideologists have been wrongly informing us are our only options.

As a political philosopher, Kendall was always pushing to deeper levels of meaning and understanding. One of the most impressive illustrations of this is his carefully honed and brilliantly argued article, "The People Versus Socrates Revisited."[51] Kendall contended that the advocates of the open society had converted Socrates-before-the-Assembly into their fundamental symbol. For example, in *On Liberty* Mill wrote:

> Mankind can hardly be too often reminded, that there was once a man called Socrates, between whom and the legal authorities and public opinion of his time there took place a memorable collision. . . .This acknowledged master of all the eminent thinkers who have since lived—whose fame, still growing after more than two thousand years. . . .[52]

Similarly, throughout *The Open Society and Its Enemies,* Karl Popper spoke glowingly of Socrates and concluded, "The new faith of the open society, the faith in man, in equalitarian justice, and in human reason, was. . .beginning to take shape. . . . The greatest contribution to this faith was to be made by Socrates, who died for it."[53]

Regarding the Mill-Popper symbol of Socrates-arrayed-against-the-Assembly, Kendall wrote:

> What symbol? The symbol, of course, of Socrates the Bearer of the Word standing with unbowed head in the presence of his accusers and judges, who hold the Word in contempt of the Servant of Truth being punished, murdered rather, for the truth that is in him; that of the Wise Man being sacrificed by fools who, had they but listened to him, would have been rescued from their folly. That symbol, I contend, lies at the root of the simon-pure doctrine [of the open society]. . .of the Mill-Popper position.[54]

It was Kendall's position that a close reading of the *Apology* and the *Crito* will reveal this to be a spurious symbol. The political theory of the *Crito* does not endorse a limitless open society of the Mill-Popper version; rather, argued Kendall, it offers a society in which the individual is accorded a reasonable opportunity to convince society of the failings and errors of its public orthodoxy. When that reasonable opportunity has been exhausted, and society chooses not to alter *its* values or orthodoxy, the individual is expected to desist or emigrate. Furthermore, after his hearing the dissenter may encounter punishment for ideas or methods found by society to be utterly repugnant to those things it treasures as fundamental. In short, the teaching of the *Crito* is not that offered by the open society advocates, for it does not propose a society in which the individual has the absolute and unlimited right to talk *ad nauseam* until society converts itself to the preachment of the dissenter. According to Kendall, this latter theory is, as has been previously noted, unworkable, unattainable, and undesirable; it is a political theory which has its roots in *On Liberty,* not in the *Crito.*

In addition, Kendall charged the open-society advocates with misunderstanding the political lessons of the *Apology.* The lesson is not that Socrates has been denied the opportunity for a reasonable hearing as required by the *Crito.* Indeed, the Athenians had been listening to Socrates for several decades. Nor was the major issue raised between Socrates and the Assembly a demand by Socrates that the Athenians keep all questions open questions and modify the public orthodoxy here or enlarge it there. The heart of the matter was that Socrates wished the Athenians to reorder their entire public orthodoxy and to bring it into conformity with his own. In pressing his case, Socrates is instructing the Athenians that their present way of life is "not worth living." Not only is their way of life foolish and frivolous; it is also base and immoral, and Socrates will settle for nothing less than a total rejection of the Athenian public orthodoxy. As Kendall summed it up,

"There is the model..., the situation of every society over against every revolutionary agitator; nor could there be better evidence of the poverty of post-Platonic political theory than the fact that it has received so little attention."[55]

It was Kendall's contention that students of political philosophy in their understanding of the forces inherent in human society will recognize the unyielding realities that leave the Athenians and the Assembly no choice:

> The Athenians are running a *society,* which is the embodiment of a *way of life,* which in turn is the embodiment of the *goods* they cherish and the *beliefs* to which they stand committed....The most we can possibly ask of them ...is that they shall keep their minds a little open to proposals for this or that improvement, this or that refinement.... To ask of them, by contrast, that they jettison their way of life, that they carry out the revolution demanded of them by the revolutionary agitator, is to demand that they shall deliberately do that which they can only regard as irresponsible and immoral—something, moreover, that they will seriously consider doing only to the extent that their society has ceased, or is about to cease, to be a society.[56]

As laudable as the thought might seem in certain situations, to ask a society to condemn and repudiate itself is unnatural and contrary to what political philosophy has learned about the *politeia,* that condition antecedent to society and government. In fine, a being, be it an individual or a society, cannot be asked to repudiate itself and to declare its nothingness, for that is unnatural, perverse, and contrary to elementary first principles on the nature of being we have culled out of our accumulated experience and wisdom.

It was Kendall's belief that we had best understand those unrelenting realities, and thereby be better able to develop the realistic open society, the society of the *Crito.* To ignore those realities, and to attempt to construct the perfected, limitless, and utopian open society of the Mill-Popper school, is to build on infirm

foundations and to court society's disintegration with the resulting potential of the closed societies of the authoritarian or totalitarian stripe. In their fervor to obtain everything, the exponents of the open society will end up getting nothing. It is that disastrous end Kendall wished to avoid.

As Kendall viewed it, the Mill-Popper proponents have read their own *de novo* theories, spun out of wholly new cloth, into the works of the ancients—such as the *Crito* and the *Apology* and they deceive themselves in contending that they are extracting their theories out of a proper reading of these classics. As Kendall would see it, Publius read Plato more accurately: "Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian citizen would still have been a mob."[57]

III

In his analysis of the Socrates of the *Apology,* Kendall was hinting strongly at the probability that the contemporary Mill-Popper school in the United States is using the argument of the purist open society as an instrument or weapon to unhinge the existing orthodoxy, not for the alleged purpose of then ushering in the wholly limitless open society, but rather, after having dislodged the existing *politeia* of American society, for instituting their own orthodoxy, which is antithetical on fundamental points to basic values of the American tradition.[58] In Kendall's view there are in contemporary America two fundamentally different orthodoxies, one liberal and one conservative, competing for dominance.[59] The contemporary liberal orthodoxy traces its history to Abraham Lincoln's heretical position on the Declaration of Independence, while the meaning and the spirit of the conservative orthodoxy are expressed in *The Federalist,* a document Kendall considered the finest expression of the essence of the American political tradition.

Kendall asserted that the primary and distinguishing mark of the modern American liberal is his ardent desire for an egalitarian society.[60] This liberal genre seeks not merely a society based

upon political equality, but, in addition, this "commitment to equality means that government should assume the role of advancing equality by pursuing policies designed to make 'all men equal' socially, economically, and politically." Kendall concluded, "There is, then, so far as one can learn, no reasonably definite stopping point for liberal egalitarianism. . . ."[61] It was Kendall's position that Lincoln wrenched the equality clause—"all men are created equal"—from the Declaration of Independence and gave it this egalitarian meaning, which the contemporary liberal has seized upon. This symbol of equality was not that intended by the drafters of the Declaration. Kendall elaborated:

> What does it [i.e., the equality clause] mean? Our best guess is that the clause simply asserts the proposition that all peoples who identify themselves as one—that is, those who identify themselves as a society, nation, or state for action in history—are equal to others who have likewise identified themselves. . . . The Declaration asserts that Americans are equal to, say, the British and French. . . . Specifically, the drafters of the Declaration are maintaining that the Americans are equal to the British and are, therefore, as free as the British to establish a form of government [of their own choosing].[62]

In Kendall's interpretation, the equality symbol of the Declaration is an equality-of-societies symbol employed for the purpose of justifying separation by the American colonies. The Lincolnian heresy lies in "internalizing" the symbol, thereby perverting it into a symbol for domestic egalitarianism and leveling.[63]

Moreover, claimed Kendall, the legacy of the Lincolnian heresy is the modern liberal concept that it is the responsibility of the central national government to promote leveling, and, in particular, it is the solemn duty of the President to lead the attack. A succession of strong Presidents, each looking more deeply into the ultimate meaning of an American tradition rooted in leveling, will launch the nation on a continuing series of missions.[64] These missions will entail marshaling majoritarian mandates for the

long-term purpose of bringing us finally to the perfected egalitarian society. Those opposing the egalitarian New Jerusalem will have to be seen for what they are—selfish recalcitrants and obstructionists. With the unrelenting pressure of exposure and "education," their resistance can be overcome.

An integral part of liberal egalitarianism is unshakable confidence in majoritarianism. Majoritarianism is integral to a leveling philosophy, for it is rooted in the concept of political equality—one man one vote. In Kendall's view, by modern liberal hands a corollary had been added to majoritarianism that demands the abolition of all obstacles to the instant expression of the majority will. In the American experience, this means the elimination of the seniority system, the filibuster, staggered elections, the amending process, nonprogrammed political parties, and in general anything that inhibits instant expression of majority preferences.[65] Liberal ideology seeks to establish a system based upon plebiscitary mandates, and it is a cardinal tenet of liberal ideology that if the majority will can be unshackled it will approve an egalitarian society. Thus in Kendall's analysis, all liberal thinking ultimately returns to the touchstone of leveling.

Kendall concluded in 1966 that he was "dead wrong" in his 1941 conclusion in *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule* that the Framers were concerned about inalienable, abstract, natural rights.[66] It is in Kendall's analysis of the political thinking of the Framers of the American constitution that we find his final articulation of the meaning of American conservatism. His last and major work, *The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition,* co-authored with his student and close friend George W. Carey, is the single best expression we have of Kendall's ideas on the Framers. It is clear that this book is the culmination of years of reading, reflection, and thought.

Kendall declared that it is not in abstract, natural rights wrenched out of the Declaration of Independence or the Bill of Rights that one finds the core of American political thought envisioned by the Framers. It is to the Preamble and *The Federalist* that one must look. From Kendall's perspective, the Preamble is

the "finest statement of purpose" of the American experiment.[67] Instead of speaking of rights, equality, power, and demands, the Preamble speaks of union, justice, tranquility, the common defense, the general welfare, and the blessings of liberty.[68] As Publius said of the Preamble in *The Federalist:* "Here is a better recognition of popular rights, than volumes of those aphorisms which make the principal figure in several of our State bills of rights, and which would sound much better in a treatise of ethics than in a constitution of government."[69]

How are the goals of the Preamble to be attained? As Kendall analyzed the Framers' intentions, they are to be attained by way of self-government. In the eloquent words of Publius: "The fabric of American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of THE CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE. The streams of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure, original foundation of all legitimate authority."[70] Taking his cue from Publius, Kendall wrote in the year of his death: "[W]hat I do take sides on is the thesis of the *Federalist Papers,* namely: That America's mission in the world is to prove to the world that self-government—that is, government by the people through a representative assembly which, by definition, calls the plays—is possible."[71]

It is from careful analysis of *The Federalist* that Kendall extracted the basic symbols of the American political tradition, which over and against contemporary liberalism, is the conservative tradition, and the principal competitor of the modern liberal orthodoxy. As indicated, the goals are symbolized in the Preamble and are to be achieved through self-government. The supreme symbol that Kendall extracted from *The Federalist* is that which shows in what manner we are to achieve self-rule. As Kendall read Publius, self-government is to be achieved by "the deliberate sense of a virtuous people."[72] Publius spoke of the "cool and deliberate sense of the community," of the importance of "reflection and choice," and of the "fullest and most mature deliberation."[73] The deliberative process, then, is the supreme symbol of *The Federalist*. And the end of the deliberative process

is consensus on how best to deal with concrete problems at specific points in history, in order to achieve, in the words of Publius, "the safety and happiness of society [which] are the objects at which all political institutions aim. . . ."[74]

In achieving consensus on how to maintain "the safety and happiness of society" through the deliberative process, Publius deplores utopian visions rooted in such doctrinaire abstractions as rights, equality, and mandates. In eschewing utopian schemes, Publius cautioned:

> Have we not already seen enough of the fallacy and extravagance of those idle theories which have amused us with promises of an exemption from the imperfections, weaknesses, and evils incident to society in every shape? Is it not time to awake from the deceitful dream of a golden age and to adopt as a practical maxim for the direction of our political conduct that we, as well as the other inhabitants of the globe, are yet remote from the happy empire of perfect wisdom and virtue?[75]

According to Kendall, even the pen name "Publius" is a product of a deliberative process. Kendall believed that the controversy over who wrote which Federalist paper was a "red herring" and demonstrated that modern scholarship had missed the point of *The Federalist*. The significant point is that Hamilton, Madison, and Jay were not seeking to force their pet theories of government on one another and on the country as a whole; rather, they were attempting to achieve a consensus of viewpoints, through the deliberative process, that would contribute to "the safety and happiness of society."[76] They were creating the supreme symbol of the American political tradition.

Kendall noted that the deliberative process, as developed by Publius, is characterized by discussion, not debate. The latter conjures up visions of rights, demands, mandates, and winning or losing, while discussion connotes, in Kendall's words, "a cooperative quest for common premises from which discourse can be-

gin, and . . . a cooperative striving not for triumph over an opponent, but for truth."[77] In the tradition of Publius, Kendall concluded:

> I do not like debates—if by a debate we mean the confrontation of two diametrically opposed positions, the trading and parrying of argument and the chalking up of points, in the fashion in which prize-fighters trade and parry blows and chalk up points. I strongly believe that such debates merely confuse issues, that their prevalence in our time is a frightening symptom of a worldwide breakdown of the discussion process, and most important of all, that our only hope lies in rediscovering the art and ethic of discussion as distinguished from debate.[78]

Kendall contended that Publius preferred discussion over elections for the same reasons he preferred it over debate. Elections, which unfortunately have become "the central ritual of American politics," elicit visions of bitter debates, confrontations between squared-off political antagonists, winners and losers, not-to-be-denied mandates, and the heavy hand of abstract majoritarianism. In contrast, discussion suggests deliberation, accommodation, moderation, harmony, consensus, and the long-term pursuit of those elusive first principles essential to the well-ordered society.

In seeking consensus through the deliberative process, Publius does not lust after unanimity: "To have required the unanimous ratification of the thirteen States would have subjected the essential interests of the whole to the caprice or corruption of a single member. It would have marked a want of foresight in the convention, which our own experience would have rendered inexcusable."[79] In addition, Publius noted, "the history of every political establishment in which this principle [of unanimity] has prevailed, is a history of impotence, perplexity, and disorder."[80] Hence, unanimity is rejected as unattainable, impractical, unworkable—and utopian.

Similarly, in Kendall's interpretation, Publius rejected majoritarianism as antithetical to the deliberative process. In contrast to

the deliberative process, which fosters discussion, accommodation, and consensus, the philosophy of majoritarianism demands a losing minority. This minority has lost the "debate" and the "election"; now it must submit to the "mandate" of "majority rule." Such theories do violence to the deliberative process, in Publius's conception of it. "Pockets of irredentism" will arise if the majority forces its mandate upon the minority. That is, if the minority is intensely opposed to the mandate, it will dig in its heels and dream of reclaiming its lost cause. In the political theories of Publius and Kendall this undermines the well-ordered commonwealth, for it contributes to the ripping and tearing of the social fabric. The deliberative process prevents "pockets of irredentism" from forming by stressing at every stage of discussion the importance of adjustment, accommodation, assimilation, and consensus.[81]

Moreover, as interpreted by Kendall, Publius opposed majoritarianism because it is abstract and inflexible; it has no theoretical capacity to deal with the real and fluid problems of "intensity." Under traditional majoritarian theory, there is an assumed uniformity of commitment on the part of the majority and the minority, and there is also a presumed equality of conviction. But often the real world of majority-minority relations is otherwise. In a given situation, the majority may not feel intensely committed to its position, whereas the minority may feel quite intent or the reverse could be true. In any case, as traditionally conceived, majoritarian theory has no capacity for accommodating that kind of situation; it can only add up raw figures to fifty percent plus one, and then enforce its mandate. As a consequence, majoritarianism can think only in one-dimensional, quantitative terms, while the real world of majority-minority relations must deal with the multifaceted problems presented by the intensity factor. Only the deliberative process, with its suppleness and flexibility, can accommodate and ameliorate the intensity problem, and thereby avoid pockets of irredentism, which those persons, along with Publius, committed to the well-ordered society wish to avoid.[82]

As the deliberative process of Publius eschews unanimity and

majoritarianism, it also rejects minoritarianism. Specifically, minorities flaunting rights and demands are not allowed to badger and coerce society as a whole. If the majority cannot run roughshod over the minority (and in Publius's view it cannot), certainly the reverse is not tolerable either. The minority can expect a sympathetic and reasonable hearing for its position, but, that having been achieved, it cannot go on *ad nauseam* in an attempt to intimidate society into submission through obnoxious and offensive methods. Minoritarian coercion, similar to majoritarianism and resulting irredentism, will tear the social tissue by putting men at each other's throats, and such a condition is antithetical to Publius's consensus-seeking deliberative process. Kendall stated Publius's position concisely: "What I do take sides on is government by consensus, which, I repeat, requires of minorities demanding drastic change that they bide their time until they have pleaded their case successfully before the bar of public—not merely majority—opinion. . . . They must . . . cool their heels in the ante-room of our basic law until they are admitted to the inner sanctum by a consensus."[83]

In Kendall's analysis, the differences between the American liberal and conservative orthodoxies (and let it be remembered that *every* society has a matrix of values called an "orthodoxy") are fundamental. The conservative orthodoxy, rooted in *The Federallst,* is based on the idea that the American people will seek their "safety and happiness" through self-government, which means, in the eyes of Publius, consensus achieved through the deliberative process. In contrast, the liberal orthodoxy, based on the Lincolnian distortion of the Declaration of Independence, seeks egalitarianism and leveling through mobilized majoritarian mandates. Publius, said Kendall, had nothing to do with equality as the final end of political society. Indeed, Publius nowhere even suggested (the Preamble would have been a fitting place to do so), let alone demanded, that leveling be the ultimate political value. Publius and American conservatives even reject the concept of "equality of opportunity." Why this rejection? In his inimitable style Kendall observed:

> The equality of opportunity goal, they would say, is unrealistic, impossible to achieve, *utopian*—and because utopian, *dangerous.* In order to equalize opportunity in any meaningful way you have, first of all—as clearheaded political philosophers have always seen—to neutralize that great carrier and perpetuator of unequal opportunity, the *family,* and you can do that, really do it, only by abolishing the family, which we will not let you do because that would be wrong.[84]

To those nurtured in the tradition of Publius, equality means "leaving people free to equalize their own opportunities . . . to the extent that they have the ability, the energy, and the determination to do it."[85]

Similarly, the tradition of Publius rejects the egalitarian implications of the liberals' "open-society" interpretation of the Bill of Rights and, in particular, of the First Amendment. As previously noted, Kendall took issue with the Mill-Popper school, which contends for the equality of ideas and thus lays the basic theoretical foundation for the unlimited "open society." And as Kendall pointed out, Publius never proposed or intended for the Bill of Rights to be interpreted and applied as the contemporary liberal orthodoxy has done. Nor did Publius ever intend for the Bill of Rights to serve as an egalitarian springboard for proponents of the "open society." Kendall and Carey argued, "We can only conclude as follows concerning the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment: Their adoption did not alter the mainstream of the American tradition which, as the Preamble and *The Federalist* would have it, comes down to rule by the deliberate sense of the community."[86]

What did Publius intend by the First Amendment? He intended, argued Kendall, to give each state within its jurisdiction a monopoly on regulating matters encompassed within the Amendment.[87] That is, Publius never intended for the Supreme Court to impose a national standard on all of the states, and he certainly would be shocked to see that development as it has unfolded in

this century. Kendall reasoned that the whole thrust of the Madisonian argument for the Bill of Rights was to "bring aboard the Masonite irredentists."[88] This goes to the supreme symbol of *The Federalist*—the symbol of the deliberative process. Madison meant that if the Masonites felt strongly on the importance of the Bill of Rights—strong enough to create a pocket of irredentism—then Madison, in the spirit of Publius, argued for accommodation. In sum, Madison never intended by the addition of the Bill of Rights to supersede "the deliberate sense of the community"; rather, he meant to support it by accommodating a minority. Modern liberalism, by wrenching the Bill of Rights out of context and bringing it into the service of egalitarianism, has again weakened the supreme symbol—the deliberative process—of the American political tradition.

IV

It is clear that Publius's deliberative process, with its emphasis on accommodation, harmony, and consensus, is antithetical to the conflict-oriented majoritarianism of the egalitarians. As a corollary, it is essential to note that as a result of the supreme symbol of the deliberative process, the followers of Publius, with Kendall as their guide, resist those fundamental institutional changes demanded by levelers. To illustrate, Publius and his political descendants are negative on the modern liberal conception of the presidency. In one of his classic pieces, Kendall reasoned that in American national politics we have "two majorities": the presidential and the congressional.[89] The former majority is rooted in the Lincolnian heresy and is the focal point of liberal leveling; the latter majority is a product of the conservative tradition as expressed in *The Federalist*. Because of the size of the presidential constituency, and because of the presidency's remoteness from local realities and concretes, presidential politics, Kendall insisted, lends itself to a campaign style, to generalities and idealism.

In contrast, members of Congress represent comparatively small constituencies, which forces them to deal with specifics and

eschew the quixotism of presidential politics. Consistent with the emphasis on the deliberative process, solving specific case-by-case policy questions, the tradition of Publius considers Congress the pre-eminent branch. In Kendall's words: "The plain language of the Constitution tells us unambiguously that Congress. . . *is* supreme, and just can't help being supreme because the Constitution places in its hands weapons with which, when and if it chooses to use them, it can completely dominate the other two branches."[90] Kendall reasoned that Congress is "the very heart of the system," and although it has the power to emasculate the other two branches, it restrains itself from doing so because of Publius's "constitutional morality" with the emphasis on harmony and accommodation, and the rejection of harsh and brittle conceptions of powers and rights, which invariably play havoc with the development of a sound social fabric.[91]

Likewise, Publius and his contemporary admirers will reject out of hand the liberal call for programmed political parties.[92] Liberal theoreticians have considered the "doctrine of responsible party government" as indispensable to facilitate equality through majoritarian mandates. In restructuring our two-party system, the liberal ideologists would create a "liberal" and "conservative" party. The new parties would be centralized and disciplined, and would offer the electorate a clear-cut choice on matters of philosophy and policy. In liberal thinking, it is anticipated (erroneously in Kendall's view) that when the American people are confronted with these dramatic choices, they will overwhelmingly pick those candidates favoring liberal egalitarianism. Hence, under the "doctrine of responsible party government" one of our major parties would become the vehicle for harnessing and implementing liberal egalitarian mandates. In liberal thought, the current decentralized and "undisciplined" parties are "irresponsible" because they serve as institutional obstacles to leveling.

Drawing his nourishment from Publius, Kendall wrote, "Contemporary theories of party discipline and responsibility represent. . . the most comprehensive and systematic possible assault

upon the Madisonian system [that is, the system of Publius]."[93] Programmed political parties do violence to that supreme symbol of the deliberative process. Because of commitment to the spirit of Publius, Kendall found, there are "no raging seas" of egalitarianism in the American experience "to hold back."[94] Publius would be repelled by an institutional change whose admitted purpose is to create sharp cleavages and to pit the majority against the minority. To structure an institution for the avowed purpose of promoting division, and thereby deliberately tearing the social fabric, is the ultimate affront to Publius and to his latter-day disciple, Willmoore Kendall.[95]

Nor would Kendall's Publius be pleased with the assertive egalitarian role of the modern Supreme Court. Indeed, the modern activist court has short-circuited the deliberative process and frequently acts in conscious opposition to it. The modern liberal has perverted the doctrine of judicial review as articulated by Publius. Concerning judicial review, Publius wrote:

> The complete independence of the courts of justice is peculiarly essential in a limited Constitution. By a limited Constitution, I understand one which contains certain specified exceptions to the legislative authority; such, for instance, as that it shall pass no bills of attainder, no *ex-post-facto* laws, and the like. Limitations of this kind can be preserved in practice no other way than through the medium of courts of justice, whose duty it must be to declare all acts *contrary to the manifest tenor of the Constitution* void.[96]

It is clear from this quotation, and from a careful analysis of all of *Federalist* 78, that Publius intended the Court, in its capacity of exercising judicial review, to have a modest role of declaring void *only* those acts of Congress (for example, as Publius stated, bills of attainder and *ex-post-facto laws*) clearly "contrary to the manifest tenor of the Constitution." Moreover, Publius expressly noted that the Court will have "neither FORCE nor WILL, but merely judgment," and "The courts must declare the sense of the law: and if they should be disposed to exercise WILL instead of

JUDGMENT, the consequence would equally be the substitution of their pleasure to that of the legislative body."[97] Expressly warning on the need "to avoid an arbitrary discretion in the courts," Publius explained:

> Nor does this conclusion by any means suppose a superiority of the judicial to the legislative power. It only supposes that the power of the people is superior to both; and that where the will of the legislature, declared in its statutes, stands in opposition to that of the people, declared in the Constitution [a product of "the deliberate sense of the community"], the judges ought to be governed by the latter rather than the former.[98]

Publius returns us to the touchstone of the supreme symbol—the deliberative process—and his position on judicial review can only be understood in that context. Unequivocally, no one can extract from *The Federalist* a conception of the role of the Supreme Court which would justify the egalitarian excursions and excesses of the modern court, where in fact the court has launched into areas manifestly beyond the scope envisioned by Publius, and where in fact "WILL" has been substituted for "JUDGMENT." The constitutional morality of *The Federalist,* resting on "the deliberate sense of the community," would not sustain such harsh impositions of judicial "WILL" as the abortion decision of *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which is based on the "arbitrary discretion in the courts" and in clear defiance of "the deliberate sense of a virtuous people."[99]

V

As Kendall read *The Federalist,* the supreme symbols of the American tradition are "rule by the deliberate sense of a virtuous people."[100] It will not suffice merely to have the deliberative process, for a process alone cannot guarantee a moral and just result. To ensure the integrity of policy decisions, it is essential that "virtue" be the basic characteristic of a people employing the deliber-

ative process. Commencing with *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority-Rule,* Kendall had expressed an enduring concern for the moral quality of society. He lamented that "the capital weakness of Locke's *Second Treatise*" was Locke's failure to address himself explicitly to the problem of how we are to ensure "rational and just" decisions by the majority.[101] Similarly, Kendall considered the principal defect of *The Federalist* to be its failure to explore this crucial problem of how to keep the people virtuous in order to guarantee the integrity and justice of those decisions made through the deliberative process.[102] In short, if the public orthodoxy is lacking in virtue, the deliberative process cannot produce a virtuous result.

With profound relief, Kendall proclaimed that this "missing section" of *The Federalist,* a section dealing with how to keep the people virtuous, is provided in Richard M. Weaver's final book, *Visions of Order.*[103] Kendall spared no superlative in his praise of this work. *Visions of Order,* he wrote, must be placed upon the shelf beside *The Federalist,* and, as with *The Federalist,* it must have conferred on it "the political equivalent of biblical status."[104] Kendall further declared "Then go read—nay, *live with*—the book, until you have made its contents your own. It will prepare you, as no other book, not even *The Federalist* will prepare you, for your future encounters with the protagonists of the Liberal Revolution, above all by teaching you how to drive the debate to a deeper level than that on which our present spokesmen are engaging the Liberals."[105] To understand *Visions of Order* is to understand Willmoore Kendall's commitment as a political philosopher to the great tradition of the study of politics, to that search for the moral, the good, and the just in things political. Kendall is unequivocal: if men believed as Weaver did, the people would indeed be virtuous, and the product of the deliberative process would thereby itself be virtuous.

No less than Publius and Kendall, Weaver was anti-egalitarian, and this attitude pervades his book. Illustrative is the following insight:

> Democracy [that is, political equality] is not a pattern for all existence any more than a form of economic activity is a substitute for the whole of living. . . . When democracy is taken from its proper place and is allowed to fill the entire horizon, it produces an envious hatred not only of all distinction but even of all difference. . . . The fanatical democrat insists upon making [men] equal in all departments, regardless of the type of activity and vocation. It is of course the essence of fanaticism to seize upon some fragment of truth or value and to regard it as the exclusive object of man's striving. So democracy, a valuable but limited political concept, has been elevated by some into a creed as comprehensive as a religion or a philosophy, already at the cost of widespread subversion.[106]

Kendall would agree with Weaver that cultural equality involves more than the "consulting of opinions and [the] counting of votes," and he would concur that "[c]ulture is thus by nature aristocratic, for it is a means of discriminating between what counts for much and what counts for little. . . ."[107] In addition, Kendall and Weaver were in agreement that the canker of egalitarianism was traceable to the quest for the secular utopia. In Weaver's words, the utopians are those "who think that human nature and history can be laid aside" and that "equality must reign, *ruat caelum!*"[108] Utopians, Weaver cautioned, are forever "postulating an equalitarian natural man as the grand end of all endeavor."[109] Finally, Weaver warned of the utopian visions "dreamed up by romantic enthusiasts, political fanatics, and unreflective acolytes of positive science."[110]

When we turn to Weaver's alternatives to utopianism and egalitarianism, we see emerging those subtle, but profound themes which so attracted and fascinated Kendall. Weaver turned to the great tradition of politics, to those fundamental and enduring principles he perceived as rooted in the structure of reality. Pervasive in Weaver's analysis was the classical concept from the great

tradition of politics instructing us that, in establishing societies and honing out civilization, it is essential we maintain a sense of proportion, balance, harmony, and tone. "Function," signifying change, and "status," suggesting position, form, memory, tradition, and permanence, must be held in balance. Where function exists without status, there is generated a momentum of mindless change, which wrenches and undermines those qualitative things so indispensable to society worthy of the name "civilized" or "virtuous." Similarly, where status exists without function, there is the risk of stagnation and sterility, and thereby a fatal blow is struck against civilization, for it is deprived of those essential elements of dynamism and creativity.

Likewise, in Weaver's analysis, it is imperative that an equilibrium be maintained between "dialectic" and "rhetoric." Where dialectic denotes reason, the abstract, and dialogue—Socrates was a dialectician—rhetoric refers to a sense of the unspoken, the felt, the intuitive, and the organic. Dialectic alone will distort reality and magnify alleged virtues and vices, and it will lead to the arid world of the logician and geometer, while rhetoric in isolation will lead to excessive reliance upon the given and the mystical, and society loses the capacity to re-examine continually in a rational method its own basic premises. Similarly, there must be a proportioned relationship between "aesthetics" and "ethics." Aesthetics refers to that sensitivity to created beauty, which without an ethical basis can degenerate into the banal and frivolous at best, and possibly into the sordid and debased. Ethics, suggesting commitment to moral principle, without the balancing effect of aesthetics, is in danger of running aground upon the bleakness and harshness of puritanism, and even of erupting into fanaticism.

In addition to these themes reflecting the classical concern for proportion, balance, harmony, and tone, which contribute to the virtue of the populace, and thereby to the integrity of the deliberative process, Weaver added religion as the ultimate foundation for a virtuous society. With uncommon eloquence, Weaver wrote:

> The Greeks could out-argue the Christians and the Romans

> could subject them to their government, but there was in Christianity an ethical respect for the person which triumphed over these formalizations. Neither the beauty of Greek culture nor the grandeur of the Roman state system was the complete answer to what people wanted in their lives as a whole.
>
> But the road away from idolatry remains the same as before; it lies in respect for the struggling dignity of man and for his orientation toward something higher than himself which he has not created.[111]

In full accord with Weaver, Kendall (through George W. Carey) stated in the final paragraph of his last book:

> The false myths produce the fanatics amongst us. They are misrepresentations and distortions of the American political tradition and its basic symbols which are, let us remind you, the representative assembly *deliberating* under God; the virtuous people virtuous because deeply religious and thus committed to the *process* of searching for the transcendent Truth. And these are, we believe, symbols we can be proud of without going before a fall.[112]

At another point, in this his major and final work, Kendall asked: "What is to keep the virtuous people virtuous? The question is as old as Greek philosophy, and Greek philosophy offered, on one level at least, the decisive answer: The people will be virtuous only to the extent that the souls of its individual components are rightly ordered. . . ."[113] Kendall cautioned against the error "of forgetting that the truth of the soul and the truth of society are transcendent truths, and that the function of the basic symbols is to express the relations between political society and God."[114] Failure to understand that basic proposition "represents a very fundamental derailment [of the American political tradition] and the most dangerous one."[115] The religious dimension is the ultimate guarantee of a virtuous people, or as Kendall wrote:

> But where the public orthodoxy is guaranteed by transcendence, by the Word of God, then the truths of the soul and of society, the first principles of the *politeia* and of metaphysics (that is the very being of both), are theoretically guaranteed. Beyond this guarantee, which can be had only as a gift and as a blessing, there is no other for any human society born upon this earth.[116]

In Kendall's view the tradition of modern American utopianism commenced by wrenching the equality symbol from the Declaration of Independence and perverting that symbol into an instrument for constructing the egalitarian New Jerusalem. This tradition is secular in its philosophical foundations. It has no conception of "sin," "evil" and "tragedy," nor does it concede the imperfectibility of the human condition; rather, it argues that human nature is wholly malleable, and that the perfected good life is attainable through institutional and environmental manipulation. Driven on by this mind's eye view of the perfected egalitarian utopia, this tradition becomes restive, anxious, and on occasion fanatical, when society seems impervious and indifferent to its hortatory. When confronted with the failure to attain the worldly City of Man, instead of reappraising the soundness of their secularism and their false view of the nature of man, the exponents of the utopian tradition double their efforts and attribute their continued failures to the ignorance of the populace ("more education is needed"), to the sinister machinations of reactionaries and recalcitrants ("greater political organization and effort is needed"), and to the general failure of society to appreciate the clarity of insight and vision of egalitarian utopianism.

From Kendall's perspective, the tradition of Publius, as enhanced by Weaver, draws its nourishment from strikingly different roots. As opposed to the secularism of the egalitarian utopians, this tradition is undeniably religious in temper. Unlike the secularist, the follower of this tradition is impressed (indeed, awed) with the wonder of creation and the mystery of being. He appreciates the relevance of such concepts as "original sin,"

"evil," and the "tragic sense of life." With Saint Augustine, he understands that "pride" is the ineradicable canker contributing to the imperfectibility of the human condition in this earthly sojourn. He loves and reveres man as the creature and child of God, but he has no illusions about the erection of a worldly utopia, for basic human nature precludes it—Man is not God, and the infinite complexity of life, thought, and matter, as the handiwork of God, will not yield to the iron-cast molds of man-made uniformity, that the egalitarians seek to impose.

By inoculating against utopianism, this religious temper produces a continuing political mood of moderation, restraint, conciliation, civility, and contributes immeasurably to the deliberative process and the pursuit of consensus, which are, according to Kendall, the foundations of the American political tradition. Where, in its zeal to create *now* the Worldly Paradise, the secular egalitarian tradition sometimes sees its petulance and impatience erupt into a shrill fanaticism, the other tradition—the tradition of Publius and Weaver, by rejecting the reconstruction of society from wholly new cloth, holds steady on course with confidence in the capacity of society for self-government through "the deliberate sense of the community" composed of a "virtuous people"—a people virtuous because religious.

The conservatism of Willmoore Kendall is grounded in the deliberative process, as expounded by Publius in *The Federalist,* and in that concept of a "virtuous people," as articulated by Weaver in *Visions of Order.* It is wide of the mark to conceive of Kendall's conservatism in terms of such conventional contemporary labels as "traditionalist," "libertarian," or whatever. His conservatism is an *American* conservatism, which Kendall contends is *the* American political tradition. From Kendall's vantage point, it is the egalitarian utopians (whether liberals or radicals) who are the "outsiders." It is they who are waging war against the tradition of Publius and of Weaver to subvert the American tradition to the man-made idol of Equality.

The lasting significance of Kendall lies not in whether one accepts or rejects his revisionist theories, for that would cast the is-

sue in too narrow a mold. Indeed, in view of Kendall's own methods as a political philosopher, he would expect—demand—that his theories be carefully examined and tested. Rather, Kendall's basic contribution is in demonstrating the technique of critical analysis: the desire to read, to question, to rethink, and to challenge. We should read the ancients and the moderns and should try to understand them as they understood themselves. Only then are we able to evaluate critically their major premises. No one is too sacred to escape examination and challenge: not Mill, not Publius, not Locke, not even Socrates. This emphasis upon careful textual analysis and upon critical evaluation of method and value is the enduring contribution of Willmoore Kendall, a needed antidote to the intellectual climate of our time, which seems to have succumbed to the narrowness of positivism and the dogmatism of ideology.

Leo Strauss

Leo Strauss (1899-1973) was a native of Germany. "I was," he reported near the end of his life, "brought up in a conservative, even orthodox Jewish home somewhere in a rural district of Germany."[1] Strauss received his doctorate from Hamburg University in 1921. To escape the Nazi holocaust, in 1938 he emigrated to the United States and commenced teaching political science and philosophy at the New School for Social Research. Joining the faculty of the University of Chicago in 1949 as a professor of political philosophy, Strauss subsequently was named Robert Maynard Hutchins Distinguished Service Professor at the institution. After his retirement in 1968 from the University of Chicago, Strauss held teaching positions at Claremont Men's College in California and at St. John's College in Maryland. At the latter institution he was named Scott Buchanan Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence, and he held that position at the time of his death.

A prolific scholar, Strauss authored a dozen books and more than eighty articles. Moreover, he spawned a generation of admiring students who have attained the highest ranks in the academic profession. As one admirer declared, "At the University of Chicago his lectures at the Hillel Foundation were events. In a university that prided itself on intellectual distinction, he was widely regarded as most distinguished."[2] Another admirer said, "He surely was the most learned man of our time in the great writings. . . ."[3] In particular, conservative intellectuals were enamored of Strauss's work. For example, to Walter Berns "He was the greatest of teachers."[4] In his assessment, Dante Germino concluded, "Strauss's impact on American philosophy and political

science has been one of almost astonishing proportions."[5] With unreserved praise, Harry V. Jaffa wrote, "For us who have had the privilege of knowing him as a teacher and as a friend, we can only say that of the men we have known, he was the best, and the wisest and most just."[6] William F. Buckley, Jr. observed that Strauss was "unquestionably one of the most influential teachers of his age," while the always exacting Willmoore Kendall referred to Strauss as "*the* great teacher of political philosophy, not of our time alone, but of any time since Machiavelli."[7] Among Strauss's books, those having the greatest influence upon American conservative thought were *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (1936), *Natural Right and History* (1953), *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (1958), and *What Is Political Philosophy?* (1959). Concerning the latter two works, Kendall exclaimed, "Both of these should be not required reading but scripture for everyone who likes to think of himself as a conservative."[8]

What was this powerful spell Strauss cast over his students—nay, his disciples? His message was disarmingly simple. He commenced with this admonition:

> However much the power of the West may have declined, however great the dangers of the West may be, that decline, that danger, nay, the defeat, even the destruction of the West would not necessarily prove that the West is in a crisis: the West could go down in honor, certain of its purpose. The crisis of the West consists in the West's having become uncertain of its purpose.[9]

The key to the resolution of the crisis lay in a restoration of vital ideas and faith that in the past had sustained the moral purpose of the West. It was necessary to go back to the origins and to explore deeply the fundamental problems. Specifically, it was imperative to study the great thinkers of the past, be they teachers of good or evil, and to study their enduring works; it was essential to understand these thinkers as they understood themselves, and from that base the task of revitalization could begin. Who are the teachers of Good? They will be found, Strauss responded, in the

classical Greek and biblical heritages; inescapably, the soul of the historical West is rooted in these intellectual traditions, and here are found the metaphysical foundations of what Strauss called "The Great Tradition" of Western politics.

II

Strauss's affection for classical Greek political philosophy is a pervasive characteristic of all his work. Strauss cautioned that when a person "engages in the study of classical philosophy he must know that he embarks on a journey whose end is completely hidden from him. He is not likely to return to the shores of our time as exactly the same man who departed from them."[10] Why study the classics? Strauss instructed, "It is not . . . antiquarianism nor . . . romanticism which induces us to turn . . . toward the political thought of classical antiquity. We are impelled to do so by the crisis of our time, the crisis of the West."[11] The fact that classical political philosophy had been replaced by modern utopian ideologies was, according to Strauss, "the core of the contemporary crisis of the West"; consequently, "the indispensable starting point" for rekindling the idea of "the very possibility of high culture" lay with a return to the classics.[12] Indeed, Strauss concluded, "After the experience of our generation, the burden of proof would seem to rest on those who assert rather than on those who deny that we have progressed beyond the classics."[13]

A subtle yet key point in Strauss's affinity for the classical heritage is his preference for the Platonic emphasis over that of the Aristotelian. Although generally laudatory of Aristotle, it is in Plato that Strauss finds the *summum bonum* of classical political thought. Strauss elaborated: "Plato never discusses any subject . . . without keeping in view the elementary Socratic question, 'What is the right way of life?' . . . Aristotle, on the other hand, treats each of the various levels of beings, and hence especially every level of human life, on its own terms."[14] Or as Strauss wrote on another occasion, "Aristotle's cosmology, as distinguished from Plato's, is unqualifiedly separable from the quest for the

best political order. Aristotelian philosophizing has no longer to the same degree and in the same way as Socratic philosophizing *the character of ascent.*"[15]

"The character of ascent," Strauss contended, leads to the Great Tradition of political philosophy:

> The Great Tradition of political philosophy was originated by Socrates. Socrates is said to have disregarded the whole of nature altogether in order to devote himself entirely to the study of ethical things. His reason seems to have been that while man is not necessarily in need of knowledge of the nature of all things, he must of necessity be concerned with how he should live individually and collectively.[16]

The ascent commences with acknowledgment that the highest calling of man is in the role of philosopher, for he alone relentlessly pursues "knowledge of the whole"— and it is essential to stress that the quest is for knowledge (*episteme*), not opinion (*doxa*). The philosopher perceives a "nature of things" that is "intelligible" and "knowable," and to a comprehension of the Truth of this whole he bends his will and talents. In keeping with the Socratic heritage, to Strauss the first step in seeking comprehension is *piety:* "The beginning of understanding is wonder or surprise, a sense of the bewildering or strange character of the subject matter."[17] More simply, "[P]iety. . .emerges out of the contemplation of nature," and in so doing man learns "to see the lowliness of his estate."[18] In perceiving his lowliness, man is acknowledging a hierarchy of being. At the pinnacle of this hierarchy is transcendent Truth, or the Good. To know Truth, to go out of the Platonic cave and to know fully the essence of the sun, would be inexpressibly exhilarating and would be the ultimate in attainment and satisfaction for the philosopher. Needless to say, total comprehension of the whole, including Truth at the pinnacle, eludes the full grasp of mortal man; yet, it is from knowing in the marrow of his intellectual being that the hierarchy of the whole exists that the philosopher is driven unrelentingly in pursuit of knowledge of the whole. To the philosopher the logic of

the matter is inexorable: Man is not self-produced; he is a part of a larger scheme of things; and no greater challenge lies before man than to attempt to discern, however dimly, the essence of that whole.

As imperfect as our knowledge is, from the Platonic-Straussian perspective, we have learned some truth; that is, there is such a thing as human knowledge, and, in fact, knowledge about important matters. For example, we know in our understanding of the whole that things have unalterable essences; more particularly, we know "that there is an unchangeable human nature."[19] Similarly, individual men have fixed natures that are not amenable to fundamental alteration or change. The initial task is to know ourselves, to perceive our fixed natures, and to attune ourselves accordingly. To the extent that we know our inner beings and accept our fixed essences as integral parts of the hierarchy of the whole, we have glimpsed the essence of classical Justice: "We shall then define justice as the habit of giving to everyone what is due to him according to nature."[20] Conversely, "Justice means attending to one's own business, bringing oneself into the right disposition with regard to the transcendent unchanging norm."[21]

The political implications of classical Platonic thinking are profound. As a consequence of the general concern for ascent, piety, knowledge, truth, justice, and kindred concepts, the Platonic tradition stresses the quest for "the best political order"— the summit of the political hierarchy. As Strauss explained, the best political order entails government by "good men":

> The claim to rule which is based on merit, on human excellence, on "virtue," appeared to be least controversial [in thought]. . . . Good men are those who are willing, and able, to prefer the common interest to their private interest and to the objects of their passions, or those who, being able to discern in each situation what is the noble or right thing to do, do it because it is noble and right and for no ulterior reason.[22]

Virtue emerges as the controlling ingredient in establishing the

best political order: "[T]he chief purpose of the city is the noble life and therefore the chief concern of the city must be the virtue of its members. . . ."[23] And what is the hallmark of virtue?: "Pseudovirtue seeks what is imposing and great, true virtue what is fitting and right."[24] Moreover, "Virtue is impossible without toil, effort, or repression of the evil in oneself."[25] As Strauss maintained, "The classics had conceived of regimes (*politeiai*) not so much in terms of institutions as in terms of the aims actually pursued by the community or its authoritative part. Accordingly, they regarded the best regime as that regime whose aim is virtue. . . ."[26] It is, then, "the character, or tone, of a society" that is the key datum to the classical thinkers in the quest for the best regime. The cornerstone in building the best political order is the character of the individual. As the society is only the individual writ large, it is "the formation of character" in the individual that preoccupied the classical thinkers. Neither institutions, environmental changes, nor science, according to classical thought, were capable of redeeming man and ushering him into the political promised land. Indeed, it was beyond the potential of mortal man to redeem himself; however, he could seek the best attainable by aspiring to ascend, and this required developing the intellectual and moral character of the individual.

There is the element of universalism in classical political thought: "By the best political order the classical philosopher understood that political order which is best always and everywhere . . . . 'The best political order' is, then, not intrinsically Greek: it is no more intrinsically Greek than health."[27] This quest for the finest is not to be confused with egalitarianism; in fact, it is the antithesis of egalitarianism: "But just as it may happen that the members of one nation are more likely to be healthy and strong than those of others, it may also happen that one nation has a greater natural fitness for political excellence than others."[28] The concept of the hierarchy of things—the movement from lower to higher—was an immutable component of classical thinking, and it indelibly etched an anti-egalitarianism into classical political thought. Strauss observed, "The basic premise of classical political philosophy may be said to be the view that natural inequality of the intellectual powers is, or ought to be, of decisive political importance."[29] Similarly, he wrote, "The founding of the good city started from the fact that men are by nature different and this proved to mean that they are by nature of unequal rank."[30]

Although classical political thought searched for an understanding of the ideal or best political order in order that man might aspire to ascend, it was categorically antiutopian. As Strauss explained it: "The classics thought that, owing to the weakness or dependence of human nature, universal happiness is impossible, and therefore they did not dream of fulfillment of History. . . . [T]hey saw how limited man's power is. . . ."[31] In contrast to the utopian, Strauss noted, "[T]he philosopher. . . is free from the delusions bred by collective egoisms. . . . [H]e fully realizes the limits set to all human action and all human planning. . . he does not expect salvation or satisfaction from the establishment of the simply best social order."[32] Concisely stated, "The best regime and happiness, as classical philosophy understood them, are impossible."[33]

"Perhaps Socrates," Strauss speculated, "does not primarily intend to teach a doctrine but rather to educate human beings—to make them better, more just or gentle, more aware of their limitations."[34] In sum, classical political philosophy "is free from all fanaticism because it knows that evil cannot be eradicated and therefore that one's expectations from politics must be moderate. The spirit which animates it may be described as serenity or sublime sobriety."[35] We return to that originating principle of piety, or as Strauss explained, "Classical political philosophy was liberal in the original sense."[36] Conversely, "The classics were for almost all practical purposes what now are called conservatives."[37]

III

In Strauss's thinking the Judaeo-Christian heritage is the second pillar of the Great Tradition of political philosophy. Unequivocally, he found the religious tradition of the West as vital to the

Great Tradition as he did the classical heritage. Revealing of Strauss's affinity for the religious basis of Western thought is his intense admiration of Moses Maimonides, described by Strauss as the "greatest Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages."[38] Maimonides' major work was *The Guide for the Perplexed,* which is directed, Strauss explained, "[T]o those believing Jews who have, by reason of their training in philosophy, fallen into doubt and perplexity. . . ."[39] or as Maimonides himself wrote, "I address those who have studied philosophy and have acquired some knowledge, and who while firm in religious matters are perplexed and bewildered on account of the ambiguous and figurative expressions employed in the holy writings."[40] Did Strauss feel that Maimonides had been successful in resolving this perplexity? Strauss answered, "*The Guide* as a whole is not merely a key to a forest but is itself a forest, an enchanted forest, and hence also an enchanting forest: it is a delight to the eyes. For the tree of life is a delight to the eyes."[41]

Maimonides "is the Jewish counterpart" of Saint Thomas Aquinas: "Maimonides reconciles reason and revelation by identifying the distinctive aim of. . . divine law, with the aim of philosophy."[42] Regarding their respective emphasis upon the classical heritage, Strauss noted a basic difference between Aquinas and Maimonides:

> For Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle is the highest authority. . . in political philosophy. Maimonides, on the other hand, could not use Aristotle's *Politics,* since it had not been translated into Arabic or Hebrew; but he could start, and he did start, from Plato's political philosophy.[43]

Thus Maimonides did out of necessity what Strauss had done by choice: both drew more heavily from Platonic than Aristotelian thought. Maimonides was able to harmonize the Platonic and Judaic tradition, Strauss observed, since both heritages sought the Ideal; specifically, Judaism became the "perfect law in the Platonic sense" of the Ideal.[44]

Strauss's admiration for Maimonides takes on a particularly

important dimension in view of the deep religious orthodoxy of Maimonides. In Strauss's words: "The remedy for this perplexity [the perplexity the philosopher has about religion] is the. . . explanation. . . that restores the faith in the truth of the Bible, that is, precisely what Maimonides is doing in *The Guide.*"[45] The basic tenet of Maimonides' thinking is rooted in Platonic and biblical piety: "Maimonides finds. . . that given man's insignificance compared with the universe man's claim to be the end for which the world exists is untenable."[46] According to Maimonides, "human reason is inadequate for solving the central problem"; consequently, he affirms the indispensability of revealed religion.[47] As Strauss concisely stated the matter: "Maimonides defines his position by two frontiers. In the face of orthodoxy he defends the right of reason, in the face of philosophy he directs attention to the bounds of reason."[48]

Maimonides's recommended approach to the study of scripture had a profound effect on Strauss. Maimonides offered these maxims: "The *deeper sense* of the words of the holy law are pearls, and the literal acceptation of a figure is of no value in itself." "Their *hidden meaning,* however, is profound wisdom, conducive to the recognition of real truth." "Your object should be to discover. . . the general idea which the author wishes to express."[49] As to reading *The Guide,* Maimonides requested, "*Do not read superficially,* lest you do me an injury, and derive no benefit for yourself. You must study thoroughly and read continually; for you will then find the solution to those important problems of religion, which are a source of anxiety to all intelligent men."[50] Maimonides concluded with an observation Strauss could only relish:

> Lastly, when I have a difficult subject before me—when I find the road narrow, and can see no other way of teaching a well established truth except by pleasing one intelligent man and displeasing ten thousand fools—I prefer to address myself to the one man, and to take no notice whatever of the condemnation of the multitude; I prefer to extricate that in-

> telligent man from his embarrassment and show him the cause of his perplexity, so that he may attain perfection and be at peace.[51]

The technique of study advocated by Strauss in his teaching career is unmistakenly vintage Maimonides. There is that emphasis upon careful textual analysis in which one eschews literalism and looks for the "deeper sense" and "the hidden meaning." In addition, as noted, there is that strong Platonic and biblical willingness, if necessary, to ignore "the multitude" and "to address" oneself to "one intelligent man." Indeed, the point is compelling: Strauss not only drank deeply of the substance of Maimonides's thought, he not only attempted to reconcile the classical and biblical views, but in addition he borrowed considerably from Maimonides's method of study, and it is not too much to say that he cast himself in the role of a modern Maimonides.

Further underscoring Strauss's commitment to the biblical heritage is his disdain for Spinoza. Maimonides and Spinoza were both of Jewish heritage. The former was devoted to preserving the biblical roots, while the latter, through his major work, *Theologico-Political Treatise,* sought to free himself and his readers from biblical guidance. Strauss was lavish in his praise of Maimonides and unsparing in his criticism of Spinoza: "Spinoza rejects both Greek idealism and Christian realism.... Spinoza's God is simply beyond good and evil.... Good and evil differ only from a merely human point of view; theologically the distinction is meaningless."[52] Spinoza's initial error is to reject the classical-biblical concept of piety: "To humility Spinoza opposes composure of mind as the joy that springs when man contemplates himself and his power of action."[53] Having rejected piety, Spinoza called for "an open attack on all forms of orthodox biblical theology."[54] Spinoza "denies revealed religion" and rejects the biblical conception of sin:

> Does there exist [in Spinoza's thinking], apart from all humanly constituted law, a law plainly imposed on all men, and of which transgression is sin? Is there human action

> which contravenes the will of God? For Spinoza, this is the question regarding the *lex divina,* and to the question understood in this sense his answer is No.[55]

As Strauss explained even more succinctly, "Spinoza's real view [is that] every man and every being has a natural right to everything; the state of nature knows no law and knows no sin."[56]

Strauss continued, "Spinoza...charges full tilt...with the wholehearted scorn of the realist free of illusions who knows the world."[57] According to Spinoza the error of religion is that it causes man to place "his trust in others rather than in himself, rather than in his own powers of rational reflection...."[58] Unlike Maimonides, Spinoza was "convinced...of the adequacy of human capacities for the guidance of life," and he demanded of "Judaism that it should justify itself before the tribunal of reason, of humanity."[59] In sum, Spinoza, "taking his stand on the unambiguous evidence and of reason," points directly to the mind and spirit of the Enlightenment:

> Interest in security and in alleviation of the ills of life may be called the interest characteristic of the Enlightenment in general. This movement sought in every way open to it to assure greater security and amelioration of life...Nothing could be more odious to the Enlightenment than the conception of God as a terrible God, in which the severity of mind and heart, and the spirit of the Book of Deuteronomy, finds its ultimate justification.[60]

What is the result of Spinoza's view?: "[T]he humanitarian end seems to justify every means; he plays a most dangerous game; his procedure is as much beyond good and evil as his God."[61] More specifically, Strauss wrote, "The explicit thesis of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* may be said to express an extreme version of the 'liberal' view," and thus Spinoza ultimately "found his home in the liberal secular state."[62]

Not only in his differing reactions to Maimonides and Spinoza does one see the religious facet of Strauss's thinking. In stating di-

rectly his personal views, Strauss reveals a deeply religious dimension. Note this somewhat cryptic remark: "It is true that the successful quest for wisdom [that is, philosophy] might lead to the result that wisdom is not the one thing needful."[63] Throughout his work Strauss employs this biblical phrase, "the one thing needful." This phrase is used by Christ in the story of Martha and Mary wherein He said to Martha, "Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, one thing is needful." Is there any doubt as to the religious implications of this statement by Strauss? "The insecurity of man and everything human is not an absolutely terrifying abyss if the highest of which a man knows is absolutely secure."[64] Strauss contended that reason is inadequate for a comprehensive explanation, for it "knows only of subjects and objects."[65] Similarly, naturalism is inadequate, for it "is completely blind to the riddles inherent in the 'givenness' of nature," and finally "humanism is not enough. . . . Either man is an accidental product of a blind evolution or else the process leading to man, culminating in man, is directed toward man. Mere humanism avoids this ultimate issue."[66]

The answer lies, Strauss reasoned, "Only by surrendering to God's experienced call which calls for one's loving Him with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's might can one come to see the other human being as one's brother and love him as oneself."[67] In addition, Strauss cautioned, "The absolute experience will not lead back to Judaism. . . if it does not recognize itself in the Bible and clarify itself through the Bible. . . ."[68] Concerning the Bible, Strauss wrote, "[I]t is true. . . I believe. . . that the Bible sets forth the demands of morality and religion in their purest and most intransigent form. . . ," and he further reflected, "[T]he orthodox answer rests upon the belief in the superhuman origin of the Bible."[69] Strauss claimed that without "biblical faith" it was not possible to see "human beings. . . with humility and charity. . . ."[70] Men of "unbelief" are "haunted men. Deferring to nothing higher than their selves, they lack guidance. They lack thought and discipline. Instead they have what they call sincerity."[71] Strauss continued with this profoundly

religious observation: "One can create obstinacy by virtue of some great villainy, but one needs religion for creating hope."[72] Compelling is this final observation, "The genuine refutation of orthodoxy would require the proof that the world and human life are perfectly intelligible without the assumption of a mysterious God."[73] There is no question that Strauss looked upon biblical knowledge of this "mysterious God" as an indispensable step toward "knowledge of the whole."

Although his personal heritage was Jewish, there is not a trace of antagonism in Strauss's writing toward Christianity; indeed, probably the most moving dimension of Strauss's thinking was his effort to afford "recognition of that common ground" between Judaism and Christianity:

> What can such recognition mean? This much: that Church and Synagogue recognize in each the noble features of its antagonist. Such recognition was possible even during the Christian Middle Ages: while the Synagogue was presented as lowering its head in shame, its features were presented as noble. . . . Even the pagan philosophers Plato and Aristotle remained friends. . . because each held the truth to be his greatest friend. The Jew may recognize that the Christian error is a blessing, a divine blessing, and the Christian may recognize that the Jewish error is a blessing, a divine blessing. Beyond this they cannot go without ceasing to be Jew or Christian.[74]

In pursuing his "common-ground" theme, Strauss argued:

> The common ground on which Jews and Christians can make a friendly *collatio* to the secular state cannot be the belief in the God of the philosophers, but the belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God who revealed the Ten Commandments or at any rate such commandments as are valid under all circumstances regardless of the circumstances.[75]

As Strauss viewed it, "The agency of the Jew and the agency of

the Cross belong together; 'they are aspects of the same agony.' Judaism and Christianity need each other."[76] To Strauss it was essential to understand that "over against scientism and humanism Judaism and Christianity are at one."[77]

Beyond "the common-ground" argument, Strauss wrote admiringly of Christian contributions to Western thought. For example, regarding Catholicism he observed:

> Anyone who wishes to judge impartially of the legitimacy or the prospects of the great design of modern man to erect the City of Man on what appear to him to be ruins of the City of God must familiarize himself with the teachings, and especially the political teachings, of the Catholic church, which is certainly the most powerful antagonist of that modern design.[78]

Be it in their "common ground" or in their separate contributions, he spoke approvingly of the Jewish and Christian heritages. It is to be cautioned that Strauss was not advocating a maudlin ecumenical synthesis of Judaism and Christianity. Strauss insisted, as noted, that beyond "the common ground" neither faith could proceed "without ceasing to be Jew or Christian." Strauss did not conceive it as the task of mortals to dilute the essence of either faith. To attempt to do so would reflect impiety in its worst form.

IV

To Strauss the issue was clear: "Western man became what he is and is what he is through the coming together of biblical faith and Greek thought. In order to understand ourselves and to illuminate our trackless way into the future, we must understand Jerusalem and Athens."[79] As had Maimonides and Aquinas, Strauss saw, in spite of certain irreconcilable antagonisms, a mutuality of interest between "Plato and the prophets." To begin with, both the classical and biblical heritages renounced human pride or *hubris* and commended piety as the key virtue: "According to the

Bible, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord; according to the Greek philosophers, the beginning of wisdom is wonder."[80] Moreover, as a corollary premise, Strauss noted both traditions "made very strict demands on self-restraint. Neither biblical nor classical morality encourages us to try, solely for the sake of our preferment or our glory, to oust from their positions men who do the required work as well as we could."[81] Similarly, "Neither biblical nor classical morality encourages all statesmen to try to extend their authority over all men in order to achieve universal recognition."[82]

In addition to emphasizing the virtues of piety and self-restraint, "Plato teaches, just as the Bible, that heaven and earth were created or made by an invisible God whom he calls the Father, who is always, who is good and hence whose creation is good."[83] Furthermore, in biblical and classical thought "justice is compliance with the natural order" of creation.[84] The wisdom of Jerusalem and Athens requires discernment of the natural order of things and man's attuning himself to that order. That is, man is not the Creator, he is the creature; he is not the potter, he is the clay. It is then man who adapts to creation, not creation to man—to propose the latter is to propose perverting the natural order of things. On the essence of God, creation, and justice, Plato and the prophets were as one.

In his analysis of the "coming together" of the wisdom of Jerusalem and Athens, Strauss cautioned, "Yet the differences between the Platonic and the biblical teaching are no less striking than the agreements."[85] First, there is the inescapable problem of "the opposition of Reason and Revelation." By its essence Reason accepts as true only that which has withstood the probing power of human logic and scientific understanding. In contrast, by its nature Revelation assumes there are truths beyond the intelligence of man to grasp. Man is finite and limited in his understanding; hence, those ineffable truths are knowable only through Revelation. Thus the philosopher yields: from the human vantagepoint, because of their respective essences, Reason and Revelation are not fully reconcilable.

Jerusalem and Athens take opposing positions on the fundamental question of whether we are pursuing truth or whether we already possess truth. Strauss explained:

> The philosopher is the man who dedicates his life to the quest for knowledge of the good, of the idea of the good.... According to the prophets, however, there is no need for the quest for knowledge of the good: God "has shewed thee, o man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.[86]

Plato and the prophets are agreed that truth is the goal, but by the very nature of their differing perspectives, the clear thinker again concedes that from the standpoint of human understanding complete reconcilability is not possible; differing essences cannot be forced into a common mold; to attempt to do so does violence and irreparable harm to the vital nature of each.

As he had done in his efforts to find "the common ground" between Judaism and Christianity, so Strauss had done in his analysis of the classical and biblical views. He looked for the mutual foundations and artfully defined and boldly asserted them; however, he resolutely refused to force either component into an unnatural synthesis of human design. The essence of things had to be respected. The philosopher-theologian could carry the matter of synthesis to the highest level possible consistent with his understanding of the nature of things; yet it was gross error—perversion—to force the unnatural union of differing essences. We would have to learn to reconcile ourselves to the irreconcilable. This was acceptable to learned men, for classical and biblical piety had disclosed that it was not in the nature of things that mortal man should have total knowledge of the whole.

V

The cardinal error of modern ideologies was to war against the nature of things, and to attempt to superimpose a strictly new design solely human in origin. With the thinking of the Renaissance, Strauss wrote, commenced the heresies of modernity: "[W]ithin the Renaissance an entirely new spirit emerged, the modern secular spirit. The greatest representative of this radical change was Machiavelli. . . ."[87] In Machiavelli, Strauss contended, lay the theoretical foundations of the modern age:

> The founder of modern political philosophy is Machiavelli. He tried to effect, and he did effect, a break with the whole tradition of political philosophy. He compared his achievement to that of men like Columbus. He claimed to have discovered a new moral continent. His claim is well founded; his political teaching is "wholly new." The only question is whether the new continent is fit for human habitation.[88]

Machiavelli launched the "first wave of modernity" as he broke sharply with the classical and biblical heritages, and as he also broke with the Great Tradition of Western political thought. Regarding Machiavelli's break with the classical tradition, Strauss observed, "Machiavelli refers so rarely to philosophy and philosophers: in the *Prince* and the *Discourses* taken together there occurs only one reference to Aristotle and one reference to Plato."[89] Concerning the key concept of piety in classical thinking, Strauss noted, "[O]ne does not find a trace of pagan piety in Machiavelli's work."[90] Similarly, "Wisdom is not a great theme for Machiavelli because justice is not a great theme for him"; consequently, there is "a movement from excellence to vileness" as Machiavelli, in departing from the classical view, "denies that there is an order of the soul, and therefore a hierarchy of ways of life or of goods."[91] In repudiating the classical view, Machiavelli denied "the possibility of a *summum bonum,*" and thereby "Machiavelli abandoned the original meaning of the good society or of the good life."[92] The "character of ascent," characteristic of classical thought, is destroyed by Machiavelli.

Nor, Strauss continued, is Machiavelli any less devastating in his attack upon the biblical tradition. In his clever and subtle attack on the biblical legacy, Machiavelli employs a conspiracy of

silence: "He silently makes superficial readers oblivious of the biblical teaching."[93] "As one would expect," Strauss said, "Machiavelli is silent about God's witnessing or the relation between the conscience and God."[94] In neither *The Prince* nor *The Discourses* does Machiavelli make a "distinction between this world and the next, or between this life and the next; nor does he mention in either work the devil or hell; above all, he never mentions in either work the soul."[95] On this latter point, Strauss concluded, "[H]is silence about the soul is a perfect expression of the soulless character of his teaching: he is silent about the soul because he has forgotten the soul, just as he has forgotten tragedy and Socrates."[96] Thus "Machiavelli unambiguously reveals his complete break with the biblical tradition, and . . . he ascribes to all religions a human, not a heavenly, origin."[97] In short, Machiavelli "is certain that the Christian religion will not last forever. It is [merely] 'the present religion.' "[98]

The cleavage between Machiavelli and Christianity is sharply reflected in fundamentally differing attitudes on the meaning of "virtue." To Machiavelli virtue (*virtu*), properly understood, meant the pursuit of worldly power and honor. As Strauss elaborated, "Not trust in God and self-denial but self-reliance and self-love is the root of human strength and greatness."[99] In other words, "God is with the strongest battalions."[100] To Machiavelli, Christian virtue had "led the world into weakness . . . by lowering the esteem for worldly glory [and by] regarding humility, abjectness and contempt for things human as the highest good."[101] In summing up Machiavelli's position, Strauss wrote, "The sins which ruin states are military rather than moral sins. On the other hand, faith, goodness, humility, and patience may be the road to ruin, as everyone understanding anything of the things of the world will admit."[102] Machiavelli was indifferent to the truth of the biblical view; he proceeded to substitute politics for religion. In his "spiritual warfare" on the historical faiths of the West he raised a banner which proclaimed that "there is no sin but ignorance."[103] Had Machiavelli's assault on the established faiths succeeded? Strauss retorted, "The problem posed by biblical

antiquity remains behind him like an unconquered fortress."[104]

Yet Strauss acknowledged the powerful effect Machiavelli has had upon the modern mind. Machiavelli was a bold "innovator" who sought to discover "new modes and orders" in the moral realm. He was "a rebel against everything that is respected," and he "liberated himself completely from belief in any authority."[105] Indeed, he attempted to establish a new authority spun from wholly new cloth. This new authority was rooted in Machiavelli's well-known proclamation "that all armed prophets have conquered and unarmed ones failed." This meant, Strauss explained, that "the primacy of Love must be replaced by the primacy of Terror. . . . Therefore the perfection envisaged by both the Bible and classical philosophy is impossible. . . . Man cannot rise above earthly and earthy humanity and therefore he ought not even to aspire beyond humanity."[106] In Machiavelli is found, then, an "attempt to replace humility by humanity," and the practical result is "to lower man's goal."[107] The purpose in lowering the goal is "to increase the probability of its attainment."[108] The new standard is "low but solid" and "its symbol is the Beast Man as opposed to the God Man: it understands man in the light of the sub-human rather than of the super-human."[109] Machiavelli's conception of the Beast Man leads to the threshold of modern tyranny, which "has its roots in Machiavelli's thought."[110] Ironically, Strauss observed, "A stupendous contraction of the horizon appears to Machiavelli and his successors as a wondrous enlargement of the horizon."[111]

In, *The Prince*, Strauss wrote, "The characteristic feature of the work is precisely that it makes no distinction between prince and tyrant: it uses the term 'prince' to designate princes and tyrants alike."[112] In Machiavelli's own words, "[F]or how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. . . . Therefore it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good. . . ."[113] In pursuing worldly honor and the praise of men, Machiavelli further instructed that the prince "must imi-

tate the fox and the lion," must, that is, alternate between cunning and violence; "in the actions of princes, from which there is no appeal, the end justifies the means. Let a prince therefore aim at conquering and maintaining the state. . . ."[114] Strauss summed up Machiavelli's instructions to the fledgling prince-tyrant: "He must pursue a policy of iron and poison, of murder and treachery . . . . [T]he patriotic end hallows every means however much condemned by the most exulted traditions both philosophic and religous."[115] "There can be no doubt regarding the answer," Strauss concluded, "the immoral policies recommended throughout the *Prince* are not justified on grounds of the common good but exclusively on grounds of the self-interest of the prince, of his selfish concern with his own well-being, security and glory."[116]

An additional result in Machiavelli's "lowering the goal" is that he "replaces God . . . by Fortuna."[117] "Fortuna is malevolent," Strauss explained, and she "mysteriously elects some men or nations for glory and others for ruin or infamy."[118] Furthermore, "[T]he end which Fortuna pursues is unknown, and so are her ways toward that end."[119] Fortuna is what is conventionally called chance, and she is the essence of human existence. Unlike the classical and biblical views, Machiavelli sees no hierarchy of order, nor does he perceive that things have essences and substances, that there is a "nature of things" independent of man's will. From the classical-biblical perspective man is a vital component of the whole, but he is not creator of the whole, nor does he have full dominion over it. The matter is otherwise with Machiavelli, Strauss noted, for "Fortuna is like a woman who can be vanquished by the right kind of man." Thus "if Fortuna can be vanquished, man would seem to be able to become the master of the universe. Certainly Machiavelli does not recommend that Fortuna be worshipped: she ought to be beaten and pounded."[120] As Machiavelli himself explained, in the case of "great men . . . fortune holds no sway over them."[121]

If fortune holds no sway over man and "if there is no natural end of man" in the Machiavellian view, then, as Strauss maintained, "[M]an can set for himself almost any end he desires:

man is almost infinitely malleable. The power of man is much greater, and the power of nature and chance is correspondingly much smaller, than the ancients thought."[122] And what are the practical implications of the notion that man is "infinitely malleable"? Strauss elaborated:

> Machiavelli takes issue with those who explain the bad conduct of men by their bad nature: men are malleable rather than either bad or good; goodness and badness are not natural qualities but the outcome of habituation.
>
> [Thus] what you need is not so much formation of character and moral appeal, as the right kind of institutions, institutions with teeth in them. The shift from formation of character to the trust in institutions is the characteristic corollary of the belief in the almost infinite malleability of man.[123]

It was to "the young" that Machiavelli took his call to join with him, as with a bold Columbus, in establishing "new modes and orders" and in settling a new "moral continent." Machiavelli stated, "I certainly think that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman. . . . And therefore like a woman, she is always a friend to the young, because they are less cautious, fiercer, and master her with greater audacity."[124] "Machiavelli tries," Strauss continued, "to divert the adherence of the young from the old to the new teaching by appealing to the taste of the young," and consequently "he displays a bias in favor of the impetuous, the quick, the partisan, the spectacular, and the bloody over and against the deliberate, the slow, the neutral, the silent, and the gentle."[125] In Machiavelli's thought, Strauss reasoned, "Reason and youth and modernity rise up against authority, old age, and antiquity." The result is "the birth of that greatest of all youth movements: modern philosophy. . . ."[126]

In *The Prince* Machiavelli instructed youth with this superficial and callow doctrine: "Only those defences are good, certain and durable, which depend on yourself alone and your own ability."[127] "Machiavelli thus establishes," Strauss wrote, "a kind of

intimacy with his readers par excellence, whom he calls 'the young,' by inducing them to think forbidden or criminal thoughts."[128] Strauss asked, "How can we respect someone who remains undecided between good and evil or who, while benefiting us, benefits at the same time and by the same action our worst enemies?"[129] "If it is true" Strauss maintained, "that only an evil man will stoop to teach maxims of public and private gangsterism, we are forced to say that Machiavelli was an evil man."[130] After all, Machiavelli himself had proclaimed in *The Discourses* that "evil deeds have a certain grandeur."[131] The Florentine, then, is "a teacher of evil," and it is only "the incredibility of his enterprise which secures him against detection, i.e., against the detection of the intransigence and awakeness with which he conducts his exploration of hitherto unknown territory and thus prepares the conquest of that territory by his brothers."[132]

VI

Although Machiavelli laid the primary theoretical foundations, Strauss considered Thomas Hobbes one of those "brothers" assisting in launching the "first wave of modernity." In fact, earlier in his writing career Strauss had viewed Hobbes as the key figure in introducing modern Western thought; subsequently he wrote, "Hobbes appeared to me [earlier] as the originator of modern political philosophy. This was an error: not Hobbes, but Machiavelli, deserves this honor."[133] "It was Machiavelli, that greater Columbus," Strauss decided, "who had discovered the continent on which Hobbes could erect his structure."[134] To understand this "structure" erected by Hobbes, it was imperative, Strauss instructed, that "the fundamental difference" between Hobbes's thinking "and the classical as well as the Christian attitude should be grasped."[135] Succinctly stated, it was essential to understand that "the shifting of interest from the eternal order of man . . . carried to its logical conclusion. . . leads to Hobbes's political philosophy."[136] As had Machiavelli, Hobbes broke completely with the Great Tradition of Western thought.

Under the tutelage of Plato, the classical perspective yearned for "the truth hidden in the natural valuations and therefore [sought] to teach nothing new and unheard-of"; rather, it sought to discover and articulate the "old and eternal." In contrast, Hobbes lusted after the "future and freely projected"; he searched for the "surprising new, unheard-of-venture."[137] At war with the classical legacy, Hobbes unleashed a violent outpouring of the modern spirit. He denied the notion of the soul, and he rejected the idea that there was a supreme good. Moreover, he denied the concept of the natural law; he repudiated the notion that there was an order of being and that there was a hierarchy of value and gradation in the nature of things. Likewise, Hobbes renounced any ideal of an objective moral order, that justice could be perceived, and that there was a natural end of man. As Strauss viewed it, Hobbes was "elated by a sense of the complete failure of traditional philosophy."[138]

Hobbes turned with comparable vehemence on the biblical heritage, preaching a doctrine of "political atheism." As to the Christian tradition, Hobbes differed with it "by his denial of the possibility that just and unjust actions may be distinguished independently of human legislation."[139] To Hobbes man "has no reason to be grateful to the 'First Cause' of [the] universe," and "there is then no reason for believing in the authority of the Bible."[140] Thus "unbelief is the necessary premise of his teaching about the state of nature."[141] In Hobbes's hands impiety is converted into a virtue.

According to Strauss, Hobbes taught a corollary doctrine of "political hedonism." In the Hobbesian scheme of things, death is "the primary and greatest and supreme evil, the only and absolute standard of human life, the beginning of all knowledge of the real world."[142] As death is the primary evil, it follows that "self-preservation" is the most basic of all rights, particularly self-preservation against violent death. In effect Hobbes upended the classical and biblical heritages and made self-preservation the *summum bonum* of the human experience; thus the ultimate sacrifices of self by Socrates and Christ in the pursuit of truth be-

come odious perversions—evil—in the Hobbesian view. Self-preservation is the supreme right; it is the foundation of political morality, and it is antecedent to all things political. Classical and biblical notions of duty, service, and sacrifice to higher transcendent callings are summarily rejected. The Hobbesian goddess is sovereign power, for she alone can offer security against violent death, the supreme evil. Strauss wrote, "[O]ne may call Hobbes's whole philosophy the first philosophy of power."[143] He did find a measure of difference between Hobbes and Machiavelli: "[W]hereas the pivot of Machiavelli's political teaching was glory, the pivot of Hobbes's political teaching is power."[144] Power and glory emerge as key pillars of modern thought; they stand in stark contrast to the classical-biblical notions of piety and service.

After Machiavelli and Hobbes, Strauss maintained, "The second wave of modernity begins with Rousseau. He changed the moral climate of the west as profoundly as Machiavelli."[145] Rousseau unleashed the romantic radical spirit of modern Jacobinism. Whereas Machiavelli and Hobbes had subtly (and even on occasion gracefully) undermined the Great Tradition, Rousseau with glee and bravado wielded the ideological sword against the classical-biblical heritage. He was obscenely impious: he repudiated God and reason and declared human passion as the center and measure of all things. Through Rousseau's concept of the General Will, which is no more than collectivized human passion, we see erected the modern idol of collective man. The wreckage lies all around and the end of the destruction is not yet in sight. Strauss concluded, "[T]he restitution of a sound approach is bound up with the elimination of Rousseau's influence."[146]

Upon the heels of Rousseau, Strauss asserted, Nietzsche ushered in "the third wave of modernity." At least in Rousseau there had been the potentially redeeming virtue of the "noble savage" exuding compassion in his tranquil and blissful state of nature. Nietzsche offered no redeeming virtue; rather, he raised the preaching of evil to the nth power. He struck savagely at the twin

pillars of the Great Tradition; with barbaric frenzy and sadistic pleasure he openly and explicity condemned Jerusalem and Athens. The heritage of Plato was rejected out-of-hand because of its emphasis upon reason in the pursuit of the Good. As had Rousseau, Nietzsche turned from reason to sentiment and passion, and he repudiated categorically any notion of a transcendent Good. Rather than the "character of ascent" of the classical view, Nietzsche led to descent into the world of the animal—the beast. Of man, Nietzsche wrote, "[The] hidden core needs to erupt from time to time, the animal has to get out again and go back to the wilderness."[147] In the same breath, Nietzsche renounced the biblical view by declaring that "God is dead." In addition, he uttered the heretofore unthinkable blasphemy that "man is god in the making," and he dismissed Christianity as no more than a "slave morality."

In place of the classical Good and Christian love, Nietzsche offered the "will to power." He wrote, "A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength—life itself is will to power; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent results."[148] In the Nietzschean view, Strauss observed, "Man derives enjoyment from overpowering others as well as himself. Whereas Rousseau's natural man is compassionate, Nietzsche's natural man is cruel," and the result is that the "harmony and peace" of the classical-biblical view are replaced by "terror and anguish."[149] Nietzsche prefers Dionysus to Apollo, prefers the egotistic and orgiastic to the humble and contemplative. In converting man, the creature, into God, the creator, Nietzsche commits the ultimate blasphemy. As a result, Strauss wrote, "Man is conquering nature and there are no assignable limits to the conquest."[150] As God, Nietzschean man knows no authority higher than himself. He repudiates all authority and guidance provided by traditional theology, philosophy, and history. When released from the restraining forces of classical reason and biblical love, with a frenzy Nietzschean man grasps for the levers of power and deliberately directs that power to the destruction of man—to the obliteration of self. Nietzsche "thus has grasped a more world-

denying way of thinking than that of any previous pessimist," and the result is the "adoration of the Nothing."[151]

VII

In breaking with the Great Tradition of the classical and biblical legacies, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and kindred spirits spawned the modern "isms." Foremost among these are positivism and historicism. "These are the two most powerful schools in the West today," Strauss observed.[152] Strauss underscored the positivist dimension in Machiavelli's thinking: "He may be said to exclude dogmatically all evidence which is not ultimately derived from phenomena that are at all times open to everyone's inspection in broad daylight."[153] Precisely stated, "Positivism is the view according to which only scientific knowledge, as defined by modern natural science, is genuine knowledge."[154] Positivism looked only to the factual and the material; it refused to think in terms of the transcendent and the spiritual—in sum, the essences of the Great Tradition were beyond its comprehension.

"Positivism," Strauss declared, "necessarily transforms itself into historicism."[155] From the viewpoint of the historicist, "History...became the highest authority.... [N]o objective norms remained."[156] Strauss elaborated, "The typical historicism of the twentieth century demands that each generation reinterpret the past on the basis of its own experience and with a view to its own future. It is no longer contemplative, but activistic...."[157] To the historicist, values "change from epoch to epoch; hence it is impossible to answer the question of right and wrong or of the best social order in a universally valid manner."[158] Historicism led its followers to the pursuit of temporal honor and glory as successful "sons-of-the-times." In substance, the modern historicists were ancient sophists in new garb. Machiavelli was a historicist in his pursuit of "power," "realism," and "new modes and orders"; similarly, Hobbes and Rousseau in their respective pursuits of "sovereign power" and the "General Will" were historicist in orientation; and Nietzsche's individual "will to power" was, Strauss maintained, no more than an extreme form of "radical historicism." Although varying in technique, in all cases these thinkers had repudiated notions of the transcendent and enduring; they sought solace and understanding in the mortal clay of specific times and places; and in so doing they broke with the Great Tradition and laid the foundations of modern historicism.

Historicism fragmented into corollary isms. The "radical historicism" of Nietzsche led to existentialism: "[I]t became clear that the root of existentialism must be sought in Nietzsche...."[159] Existentialism rejected "the assumption that being is as such intelligible," and it pitted the "will to power" of each individual against an indifferent, sometimes hostile, and always meaningless universe. It was a pathetic mismatching of power; the individual invariably lost, for in searching solely within himself for the resources to prevail, man found his stock of private resources woefully inadequate, and he inevitably succumbed to his infinitely more formidable opponent, blind fate. Under these despairing circumstances, the ineluctable end was nihilism. "Let us popularly define nihilism," Strauss wrote, "as the inability to take a stand for civilization against cannibalism."[160] Indeed, to those caught up in the depressing web of existentialism and nihilism, cannibalism was an acceptable alternative, for it offered escape even though through self-destruction.

Finally, the "three waves of modernity" led to the great heresy of utopianism. The classical and biblical traditions were rooted in piety, and thus though they strove powerfully to perceive the transcendent Ideal, there were no illusions that the human condition was perfectible; it was not inherent in the nature of things: from the classical perspective mortal man could never expect to escape completely the limitations of the Platonic cave, and in the biblical view only God's grace, not human effort, could fully redeem. The philosophical founders of the modern age contended otherwise; they did promise an earthly utopia. Machiavelli had proclaimed that Fortuna or chance could be conquered, and that man could be "master of the universe." Hobbes assured his listeners that

"not divine grace, but the right kind of human government" would allow man to escape the limits of nature; Rousseau likewise maintained that man was "infinitely perfectible" and that there were "no natural obstacles" to human progress. And Nietzsche brazenly asserted, in Strauss's words, "that man is conquering nature and there are no assignable limits to that conquest."[161] As Strauss assessed the impulse of modern utopianism, he found it predicated on the notion of "man's conquest of nature for the sake of the relief of man's estate."[162] Hence "[t]he modern project...demands that man should become the master and owner of nature," and it holds out the promise not only of "emancipation" but of "secular redemption."[163] This was a powerful ideology that had come to grip the modern imagination, and it moved with confidence and relentlessness.

To Strauss modern utopianism was little more than ancient tyranny. Its essentials were well known to classical and biblical thinkers (after all, "there is nothing new under the sun"), and it was antithetical to the Great Tradition of Western political thought. While the latter tradition stressed piety, the order of things, truth, justice, love, service, hope, and the attunement of man to the ordained nature of things, the legacy of tyranny was founded upon pride, egalitarianism, relativism, perversion, terror, power, despair, and the rebuilding of the human condition from new foundations of a strictly human design. Strauss summarized, "In limitless self-love, in frenzied arrogance, the tyrant seeks to rule not merely over men but even over gods."[164] Tyranny was a massive heresy; its roots were Machiavelli; and it found its fullest expression in modern totalitarianism, in National Socialism and Communism.

The armed ideology of National Socialism had been halted by World War II, and in that Strauss rejoiced. It was the relatively unchecked growth of contemporary Communism, the ultimate in tyranny, that deeply troubled him. "The victory of Communism would mean," Strauss wrote, "the victory of the most extreme form of Eastern despotism."[165] What of those "new" political scientists who expected Communist regimes "to transform themselves gradually into good neighbors?"[166] They were "criminally foolish," retorted Strauss; they knew nothing of the immutable ideological character of the Marxist-Leninist mind; and because these thinkers had ceased to draw intellectual and spiritual nourishment from the Great Tradition, as "old fashioned political scientists" had done, they appeared incapable of discerning tyranny, let alone condemning it. In probably his most famous statement, Strauss lamented:

> Only a great fool would call the new political science diabolic: it has no attributes peculiar to fallen angels. It is not even Machiavellian, for Machiavelli's teaching was graceful, subtle, and colorful. Nor is it Neronian. Nevertheless one may say of it that it fiddles while Rome burns. It is excused by two facts: it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns.[167]

VIII

Although Strauss saw contemporary society gravely threatened by the modern "isms," he was not a teacher of despair. "Not anguish but awe is 'the fundamental mood'," Strauss advised, and he added that it is false to assume "that a prophet is true only if he is a prophet of doom; the true prophets are also prophets of ultimate salvation."[168] Even when confronted with the monstrous evils of contemporary totalitarianism, Strauss counseled, "There will always be men who will revolt against a state which is destructive of humanity or in which there is no longer a possibility of noble action and of great deeds."[169] This rich prophecy, perhaps now symbolized in the figure of a Solzhenitsyn, gives assurance that out of the very crucible of degradation springs hope and thereby power; thus out of evil itself emerges good. If this is the case, and Strauss contended that it was, hope inhered in the nature of things. There is cause then for joy, not despair. The ultimate metaphysical center in Strauss's thinking is one of affirmation, not negation.

Building successfully on the foundations of hope is not likely to be accomplished by merely offering alternative "isms" of more alluring and comforting nature. John Locke, whom conventional wisdom considers the theoretical patron saint of American democrary, does not point to the needed solution, for "Locke is closer to Machiavelli than he is generally said or thought to be": "Locke enlarged self-preservation to comfortable self-preservation and thus laid the theoretical foundation for the acquisitive society."[170] The Lockean tradition negated notions of duty and service, of excellence and virtue, and offered instead tantalizing visions of ever-expanding rights which fostered egoism. Locke was a "political hedonist." Nor, continued Strauss, did libertarianism in general possess the theoretical strength and depth to withstand the evils of the modern "isms." Rooted also in hedonism and egoism, libertarianism soon produced cloying and aimlessness, and life degenerated into "the joyless quest for joy."[171] Libertarianism left the "ultimate sanctity of the individual as individual unredeemed and unjustified."[172] Similarly, there was no redemptive power in modern statist liberalism. Its ethical foundations were appallingly thin: it challenged no one to virtue and service; rather, it openly, unrelentingly, and arrogantly pandered to hedonism by promising material surfeit through governmental planning and edict. Knowledge no longer had "the character of ascent" in relation to the transcendent and enduring; it existed exclusively to serve the ever escalating material demands of the unrestrained human ego. Strauss concluded, "There is undoubtedly some kinship between the modern liberal and the ancient sophist."[173]

Moreover, it was unlikely that some form of traditionalism alone could restore the needed metaphysical foundations. Strauss was not hostile to traditionalism if it were properly understood as a corollary to a deeper metaphysic. As a corollary theorem, it had the value of restraining men from engaging in mindless and reckless innovation; it served as a preventive to impiety, the rankest and most ancient of heresies. However, the potential error of unassisted traditionalism was its equating "the good with the ancestral."[174] Strauss warned, "But not everything old everywhere is

right."[175] "Prudence," Strauss cautioned, "cannot be seen properly without some knowledge of 'the higher world'—without genuine *theoria*."[176] In sum, the ultimate goal is ascent to the Truth, and unexamined traditionalism frequently serves as a deterrent to that upward thrust.

The only course open to restoring the essential theoretical foundations seemed clear. Contemporary man had succumbed to the petty dogmas and harsh ideologies of the modern thinkers. To restore the intellectual vitality of the Western tradition, to alleviate the crisis of modernity and to avert disaster, it was imperative to reject the modern "isms" and to repair to the restorative powers of the classical and biblical heritages—to the Great Tradition of Western politics. Strauss never defined his intellectual position as "conservative"; perhaps there was the risk that any newly spawned "ism," no matter how nobly conceived, would degenerate into another fleeting variant of historicism. Yet American conservatives happily accepted Strauss on his terms; they drew incalculable sustenance from him; many shared his belief in the restorative powers of the Great Tradition; and finally, conservatives instinctively knew that Strauss, the teacher, was correct: to endure and to prevail it was imperative to escape the stifling clutches of historicism.