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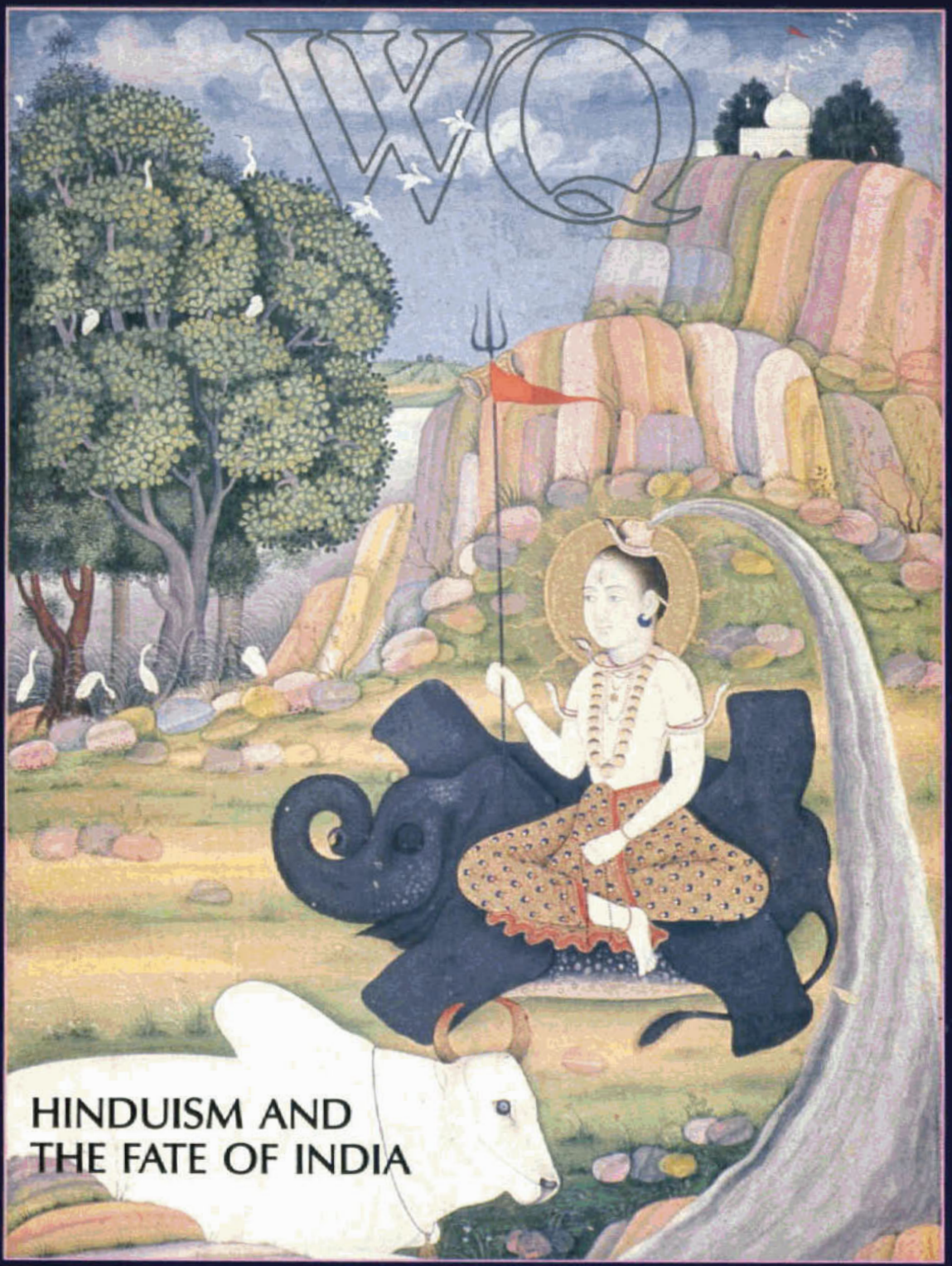

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USPS 346-670 VOL. XV NO. 3

The Wilson Quarterly *(ISSN-0363-3276) is published in January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Autumn) by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at 370 L'Enfant Promenade S.W., Suite 704, Washington, D.C. 20024. Indexed biennially. Subscriptions: one year, $24; two years, $43. Outside U.S.: one year, $30.50; two years, $56. Air mail outside U.S.: one year, $39; two years, $73. Single copies mailed upon request: $7; selected back issues: $7, including postage and handling; outside U.S. and possessions, $8. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. All unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Members: Send changes of address and all subscription correspondence with* Wilson Quarterly *mailing label to Subscriber Service,* The Wilson Quarterly, *P.O. Box 56161, Boulder, Colo. 80322-6161.* **(Subscriber hot line: 1-800-876-8828.)** *Postmaster: Send all address changes to* The Wilson Quarterly, *P.O. Box 56161, Boulder, Colo. 80301. Microfilm copies are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. U.S.A. newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, Ohio 44870.*

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From the Center

I am writing this, with a deep sense of personal loss, only days after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. He was a gentle and decent man, thrust by the death of his brother and the assassination of his mother into a role which he was genuinely reluctant to assume.

I hesitate to speculate at this early date on the ultimate consequences of his death, but it is possible to speak of some facts that are as salient now as they were before the assassination, and of some problems that have clearly been exacerbated by it.

During the 44 years since it achieved independence, India has been engaged in what is arguably the most important political experiment of our time. What has been (and is) at stake is nothing less than the question of whether democratic government, civil liberties, and the rule of law can persist against almost insurmountable obstacles in a Third World country with a population rapidly—indeed, all too rapidly—approaching a billion people.

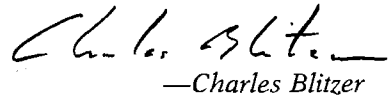
If the *WQ*'s focus on Hinduism was timely before May 21, it is now urgent. For all but four of its years as an independent state, India was governed by the centrist, secularist Congress Party of Rajiv Gandhi, his mother, and his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru. While one may argue about their success in bringing an entire subcontinent into the 20th century, they did adhere to their overriding goal of transcending the deep divisions of religion, caste, language, and local loyalties that have beset India since its creation. But even before Rajiv Gandhi's death, it was clear that something new was happening. In the place of a crazy-quilt of opposition parties that represented every conceivable shade of opinion and every imaginable local and special interest, one formidable and coherent party came forward to challenge Congress: the BJP (the Indian People's Party), an explicitly Hindu party variously described as "fundamentalist," "revivalist," and "extremist."

The rise of the BJP is especially disturbing because of India's tremendous religious diversity. Even after the amputation of Pakistan and Bangladesh, India contains the second largest Islamic population on earth; when one adds its substantial and powerful Sikh, Jain, and Parsee minorities the prospect of a government explicitly dedicated to making India a "Hindu nation" can scarcely be considered with equanimity. And although it fell short of victory in the recent elections, there is no reason to suppose that the BJP and its supporters will simply disappear.

Whatever the immediate future may hold, India will continue to deserve—indeed, to demand—our attention and study: as the world's largest democracy, facing its gravest challenge; as what the *Economist* recently called "an economic miracle waiting to happen"; as a regional superpower with nuclear capability and advanced missile technology; as an unequaled laboratory for the study of ethnicity and pluralism; and as the home of many of the world's great cultures.

For its part, the Woodrow Wilson Center is continuing the effort to understand this enigmatic country. We will have at the Center next year an American authority on the Indian Constitution, whose first book the Attorney General of India called "a unique contribution to our legal and political literature"; the official biographer of Nehru; and Sri Lanka's leading historian, who will be writing on his nation's troubled relationship with India, a topic made all the more poignant by Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

What is striking, particularly to those of us with a longstanding interest in the subcontinent, is the absence of similar attention on the part of this nation's government and private sector. No secretary of state has visited India since 1983; perhaps five members of Congress visit each year, generally on their way to or from someplace else; U.S. private investment in India is negligible. Morally, intellectually, even in terms of cold calculation, this neglect seems shortsighted and unconscionable. India's great experiment is in jeopardy. Whether it will survive no one can say, but one can insist, in the words of Willy Loman's wife: "Attention must be paid."



—Charles Blitzer
Director

The Wilson Center has published the *Quarterly* since 1976. It also publishes Wilson Center Press books, special reports, and a series of "scholars' guides" designed to help researchers find their way through the vast archival riches of the nation's capital. All this is part of the Wilson Center's special mission as the nation's unusual "living memorial" to the 28th president of the United States.

Congress established the Center in 1968 as an international institute for advanced study, "symbolizing and strengthening the fruitful relation between the world of learning and the world of public affairs." The Center opened in 1970 under its own presidentially appointed board of trustees, headed by former vice president Hubert H. Humphrey.

Chosen in open annual worldwide competitions, some 50 Fellows at the Center carry out advanced research, write books, and join in discussions with other scholars, public officials, journalists, and business and labor leaders. The Center is housed in the original Smithsonian "castle" on the Mall. Financing comes from both private sources and an annual congressional appropriation.

PERIODICALS

Reviews of articles from periodicals and specialized journals here and abroad

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Horatio Alger On the Bench

"From Rags to Robes: The Horatio Alger Myth and the Supreme Court" by E. Digby Baltzell and Howard G. Schneiderman, in *Society* (May-June 1991), Rutgers—The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

America's aristocrats, Tocqueville observed, are to be found not among the rich, but rather occupying "the judicial bench and bar." Insulated from popular pressures and appointed for life, the justices of the Supreme Court appear to be the cream of that aristocracy. It seems only natural that they would be people of privileged origins, especially compared with U.S. presidents. The reality, however, is just the reverse, point out Baltzell and Schneiderman, sociologists at the University of Pennsylvania and at Lafayette College, respectively.

Comparing the social origins of the eminent jurists and the presidents, Baltzell and Schneiderman found Horatio Alger much more often sitting on the bench than in the Oval Office. Of the 36 chief executives from George Washington to Richard Nixon, no less than 31 came from upper-class or upper-middle class families; only five—or 14 percent—came from middle- or lower-class homes. By contrast, of the 96 Supreme Court justices from 1789 to 1969, 32—or 33 percent—emerged from such relatively humble backgrounds. Most (18) of these 32 jurists came from "solid middle class farming or small-town families." Others were the "sons of poor farmers and lower-status small-town residents." The two jurists from truly underprivileged backgrounds were Abe Fortas and Thurgood Marshall. Fortas, the son of immigrant Jews, grew up in the ghetto of Memphis, Tennessee. His father was a cabinet-maker who taught himself English; his mother was illiterate. Marshall grew up in a black ghetto in Baltimore, his father a servant at an exclusive club and his mother a teacher at an all-black elementary school.

Surprisingly, the historical record suggests that presidents born with a silver spoon in their mouth generally perform better than the self-made men who climb to the top. Of the eight presidents deemed "great" or "near-great" in several surveys of scholars, only one—Abraham Lincoln—did not have a privileged background. On the aristocratic Supreme Court, however, men born in the proverbial log cabin have generally done much better. Thirteen of the 27 justices ranked "great" or "near-great" by legal scholars and historians in a 1970 survey had not been born to privilege.

What accounts for the better record of the "humble" on the Supreme Court? Baltzell and Schneiderman say it may be that "presidential performance depends to a greater extent on the subtleties of upper-class habits of authority, whereas professional competence and superior intelligence are more essential for Supreme Court performance." A look at the class origins of the eight "great" and "near-great" *chief* justices seems to bear that out: Five of the eight distinguished ones came from the upper class. In that post, Baltzell and

Schneiderman say, "professional competence must be augmented with the subtle qualities of leadership apparently possessed also by upper-class presidents." Still, Americans of more modest origins may be glad to know, one of the chief justices ranked by the authors as among the very greatest, Earl Warren, rose from quite humble beginnings. He was, it seems, a true aristocrat.

Liberalism at Bay

"Race" by Thomas Byrne Edsall with Mary D. Edsall, in *The Atlantic* (May 1991), 745 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

The Democratic Party, which has lost five of the last six presidential elections, has a serious problem—yet Democratic liberals haven't been able to bring themselves to face it. So contend Edsall, a noted *Washington Post* political reporter, and his wife, a writer. The Democratic Party, they say, vitally needs white working-class and lower-middle-class voters. But such Americans "have been caught up in an explosive chain reaction of race, rights, values, and taxes which has propelled significant percentages of them out of the Democratic Party in presidential elections and into the 'unreliable' column in state and local contests." So long as liberal Democrats respond to these defections with charges of racism, the Edsalls say, their party is doomed to defeat.

This year's battle between President George Bush and congressional Democrats over "quotas" and the "civil rights" bill underscores the importance race has assumed in American politics.

In recent decades, the Edsalls argue, a polarization of the electorate has taken place—and public policies backed by liberals have been behind it. Affirmative action, busing to achieve racial integration, and "much of the rights revolution in behalf of criminal defendants, prisoners, homosexuals, welfare recipients, and a host of other previously marginalized groups have, for many voters, converted the government from ally to adversary. The simultaneous increase . . . in crime, welfare dependency, illegitimacy, and educational failure [has] established in the minds of many voters a numbing array of 'costs'—perceived and real—of liberalism." Yet liberals, say the Edsalls, have had "major difficulty" even recognizing those costs.

The replacement of a liberal majority in American politics with a conservative majority, they note, involved the conversion of only about 5–10 percent of the electorate—mainly white working-class voters. Alabama Governor George Wallace, running as a third-party presidential candidate in 1968, showed the GOP how to win their support. He "defined a new right-wing populism" and portrayed the Democratic establishment as bent on imposing an unwanted liberal agenda on the American electorate.

The Democrats obliged by radically changing their party's rules. The power to nominate presidential candidates was shifted from the state and local party orga-

nizations, which represented blue-collar Democrats, to rights-oriented liberal reformers and other activists. Democratic presidential hopefuls since 1972 have had to woo an "artificially liberal" primary electorate. They receive "virtually no training in the kinds of accommodation and bargaining essential to general-election victory." And if recent GOP efforts to win support among affluent middle-class blacks are successful, the Democratic Party will be further isolated as "the party of poor, underclass black America."

To regain its ability to build a winning alliance, the Edsalls say, Democratic liberalism must do what it so far has avoided doing: learn from defeat. For this to happen, in their view, the party may have to suffer even greater defeats (such as loss of control of the House and Senate) or else undergo the sort of "civil war" that Republicans endured during the 1960s.

LBJ and the Wise Men

"Serving the President: The Vietnam Years" by Clark Clifford with Richard Holbrooke, in *The New Yorker* (May 6, 13, 20, 1991), 20 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

On March 31, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson stunned the nation by announcing that he would not seek another term in the White House. The surprise came at the end of a speech in which he unveiled a limited halt to the bombing of North Vietnam and proposed peace negotiations. Was his sacrifice made in an effort to end a war that—after prodding by the fabled Wise Men of the American Establishment—he finally had come to realize could not be won? Many people then and since have thought so. But in these excerpts from his long-awaited memoirs, former Defense Secretary Clifford (1968–69) says that LBJ remained ambivalent about his objective.

"I suspect that in the inner recesses of his mind Johnson was torn between a search for an honorable exit and his desire not to be the first president to lose a foreign war," Clifford writes. "During the remainder of his presidency, he sent conflicting signals and possibly lost the opportunity . . . to end the war."

Just five days before his speech, Johnson met with former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance, and several other pillars of the Establishment—and then, after listening to them, took Clifford and Secretary of State Dean Rusk aside and angrily asked, "Who poisoned the well with these guys?" The "poisonous" view they were advancing was that the United States should start to disengage from the war.

Contrary to later legend, Clifford says, the Wise Men were not unanimous in that view. The elder statesmen had gathered in the State Department for a dinner-party discussion of the war and formal briefings the night before their fateful meeting with LBJ. Retired generals Maxwell Taylor and Omar Bradley, former Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Murphy, and Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas favored pressing ahead with the war, as U.S. military commanders wanted. Most of the Wise Men, however, did favor disengagement—and what they had to say did affect Johnson. Dean Acheson, "speaking almost *ex officio* for the foreign-policy establishment . . . had an unquestionable impact on the president," Clifford writes. So did former Korean war negotiator Arthur Dean, who told Johnson that "all of us got the impression last night, listening to [the briefings], that there is no military conclusion in this war—or any military end in the near future."

Just a week earlier, when Clifford had proposed that he call the Wise Men together, the president had still thought of his planned March 31st speech "primarily as a justification for a decision to send . . . more troops [to Vietnam]." And even after LBJ met with the Wise Men, the latest draft of the speech remained "a hard-line defense of the war."

Two days before the speech, however, Johnson indicated that he was going along with a different draft, one that spoke of

"the prospects for peace" and announced a halt in the bombing. Clifford was "truly moved" at the president's "turn toward peace." (Even Clifford did not know until just before the speech was delivered, however, of the surprise ending Johnson had in mind.) But LBJ's ambivalence did not go away—and so for the next 10 months, his administration was sharply divided over what the goal in Vietnam should be. As a result, Clifford believes, a chance for peace was lost.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Why the Experts Were So Wrong

"Why Were We Surprised?" by W. R. Connor, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1991), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Despite prodigious intellectual labors (and prodigious sums spent to make them possible), Western Sovietologists failed to foresee in any clear way the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Where did the analysts go wrong? Connor, director of the National Humanities Center at Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, says that it was in neglecting the "emotional context" of economic and political change.

Western Sovietologists, he argues, peered at Soviet reality through the thin slit of social science, and paid attention to only a very narrow range of factors: data on military force, economics, agricultural productivity, and the relationships among leaders. And with the focus on the Kremlin, it was hard to see what was happening outside Moscow. The country's economic distress could be documented and "modeled," and the "options" available to Soviet leaders, along with their various consequences, calculated. But left out, Connor says, were "the passions—the appeal of ethnic loyalty and nationalism, the demands for freedom of religious practice and cultural expression, and the feeling that the regime had simply lost its moral legitimacy. These considerations were 'soft' or 'unscientific,' and those who emphasized them could be scorned." Sovietologists came to assume "that, for our lifetime at least, the Soviet Empire was here to stay."

Yet even had the analysts had a truer purchase on the Soviet reality, they might not have been better seers. For it may well be, Connor suggests, that the world has entered a time of radical and unpredictable change. The revolution in Eastern Europe, he notes, coincided with a "widespread resurgence of demands for ethnic autonomy and consequent challenges to multi-ethnic states. These tensions have been evident in some African and Asian lands, and throughout the Middle East and the Balkans and in Canada."

If the world is in "a period of indeterminate change," Connor says, what is needed for the education of the statesman and the citizen is not "more elaborate calculations, more sophisticated modeling, or greater expenditures on the familiar forms of 'security studies,'" but rather a "greater attunement to emotional and moral factors, to the persistent claims of primary attachments, and of religious, ethnic, and national identities."

True security is likely to be found, Connor writes, not in efforts to develop systems of prediction, but in "an awareness of complexity, a respect for limits, and what the Greeks would call 'practical intelligence' . . . . At its heart is the recognition that in diplomacy, as in war, plans rarely work out as expected and ironic outcomes are to be anticipated. It prizes, above all, adaptability and teaches, first of all, preparedness. It offers no solutions, no predictions, no assurances of swift reform or universal concord. But in a world of unexpected outcomes such modesty may provide our best hope of survival."

Explosive Intelligence

"Bombshell" by Ronald Radosh and Eric Breindel, in *The New Republic* (June 10, 1991), 1220 19th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Diehard defenders of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and other convicted Soviet spies have long dismissed the idea that espionage might have helped the Soviet Union learn how to make an atomic bomb. Now comes confirmation that that was exactly what happened, and it comes from an unexpected source: the KGB itself. Radosh, co-author of *The Rosenberg File* (1983), and Breindel, editorial page editor of the *New York Post*, report that in a recent issue of the Soviet weekly, *New Times*, KGB Colonel Vladimir Matveyevich Chikov, a senior officer in the KGB's new public information office, discloses that espionage played a key part in the development of the Soviet atom bomb, and that American Communists were important spies.

Academician Igor Kurchatov, the late head of the Soviet A-bomb project, explicitly said, according to Chikov, that espionage "accounted for 50 percent of the project's success." The Soviets exploded their first atomic bomb on August 28, 1949, ending the U.S. monopoly on the horrendous weapon. Chikov reveals that two American Communists, Morris and Lona Cohen, had what Radosh and Breindel call "the central role" in establishing an atom bomb-related spy ring in the United States. Cohen, a New York schoolteacher, and his wife suddenly vanished after the Rosenbergs were arrested in June 1950. They were discovered in London in 1961, convicted of spying by a British court, and included in a 1967 spy swap with the Russians.

The Rosenbergs were convicted in 1951 of conspiring to commit espionage and executed two years later. The Rosenberg spy ring, Radosh and Joyce Milton concluded in their *Rosenberg File*, was "never the primary conduit of U.S. atomic secrets to the Soviets. The data stolen by David Greenglass [Ethel Rosenberg's brother who, as an Army enlisted man, was stationed at Los Alamos], while not without significance, was less important than that provided by [Manhattan Project physicist] Klaus Fuchs."

The information gathered by the Cohens, according to a 1943 memo by Soviet A-bomb project chief Kurchatov that was cited in the Chikov article, was "of tremendous, inestimable importance for our State and our science." It prompted the Soviets to "revise our views on many problems," he said, and enabled the Soviets to "bypass many laborious phases involved in tackling the uranium problem."

The Kurchatov memo, Radosh and Breindel say, corroborates what Soviet physicists who worked on the atom bomb project have told Stanford political scientist David Holloway. The physicists "were always astounded as to how, at crucial junctures, Kurchatov had come up with new methods of research and new questions, and had consistently managed to steer them in the right direction." Now they—and the rest of the world—know how he did it.

The Gulf War And Vietnam

"Creighton Abrams and Active-Reserve Integration in Wartime" by Lewis Sorley, in *Parameters* (Summer 1991), U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, Pa. 17013-5050.

Last August, when President George Bush launched the first major U.S. military operation overseas since Vietnam, he promptly called up the reserves. Twenty-five years earlier, when he vastly expanded the U.S. military commitment in Vietnam, President Lyndon B. Johnson had avoided such a move. In the difference lies a significant tale, says Sorley, a defense policy analyst. Bush, in fact, had little choice. Long before, as part of the U.S. military's own unsung efforts to prevent "another Vietnam,"

A Splendid Little War

The United States may have "kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all," as President Bush put it after the Persian Gulf War. But did the war return America to the red-white-and-blue spirit of World War II? Theodore Pappas, assistant editor of *Chronicles* (June 1991), says an earlier U.S. war offers a less happy analogy.

The Persian Gulf was recently the scene for a replay of the Spanish-American War. This time our "Manifest Destiny" was the "New World Order." Our Teddy "Rough Rider" Roosevelt was "Stormin' Norman" Schwarzkopf. Our "Butcher" Weyler was "Hitler" Hussein. Our Frederic Remington was Peter Arnett. Our "Cuban sugar" was Kuwaiti oil. Both wars were crusades for the liberation of a small and defenseless country from an oppressive, "inhuman," but weak and financially drained power, and both wars were immensely popular, shockingly short, and studded with decisive victories and few battlefield losses....

Shakespeare's King Henry V, in assessing the slaughter at Agincourt—10,000 dead French and less than 30 dead English—asked, "Was ever known so great and little loss/On one part and on th' other? Take it, God,/For it is none but thine!" The secretary of state, however, is no humble Henry: "It has been a splendid little war, begun with the highest motives, carried on with magnificent intelligence and spirit." That might have been James Baker or President Bush... but it was Secretary of State John Hay in 1898.

General Creighton Abrams, Army chief of staff in 1972–74, had begun to restructure the Army so that it could not again be sent to war without the reserves.

LBJ's refusal to use the reserves had baleful consequences, Sorley notes. The reserves, much to the dismay of their dedicated members, became havens for draft dodgers. And the active force, unable as it expanded to call upon experienced reserve officers and NCO's, saw the quality of its leaders diluted. Perhaps even more important, leaving the reservist husbands and fathers at home while teenaged draftees did the fighting left the public relatively detached from the war.

To prevent a recurrence, Abrams charted a path toward a thorough integration of reserve and active elements. In the mid-1970s, many support responsibilities, including such vital functions as transportation and communications, were assigned to the reserves. Also, some reserve combat units were assigned to "round out" active divisions—and were expected to deploy right along with them. By 1989, half of the Army's active divisions included reserve round-out brigades or battalions, and over two-thirds of the Army's tactical support strength was in the reserves.

The first major test of the system came in the Persian Gulf. Reserve *support* units were quickly mobilized. But, Sorley points out, no *combat* reserve forces were mobilized at first, even though two of the Army divisions sent to the desert supposedly had round-out brigades from the Army National Guard. "Abrams' fear had always been that... the political leadership would fail to call up the reserves," Sorley observes. But now, "it was the *military* leadership that did not want the combat reserves." Three round-out combat brigades eventually were called to active duty—but none were sent to Saudi Arabia.

What happened in the Gulf foreshadows

the future, Sorley thinks. Reserve combat forces will literally be held in reserve. But, just as in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, he says, selected reserve *support* forces will be deployed early on. The importance of using America's military reserves is one "lesson of Vietnam" that was reinforced in the Persian Gulf.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Corporations Without Countries

"Does Corporate Nationality Matter?" by Robert B. Reich, in *Issues in Science and Technology* (Winter 1990–91), National Acad. of Sciences, 2101 Constitution Ave., Washington, D.C. 20418.

Does improving U.S. "competitiveness" mean making American-owned corporations more productive and profitable, and boosting their share of world markets? Not so much as it once did, contends Reich, of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. With U.S. corporations increasingly employing foreign workers, and foreign firms stepping up investments in this country, maintaining and enhancing Americans' standard of living, he says, now depends "less on the competitiveness of U.S. corporations than . . . on the value that the American workforce is able to add to the global economy. And what is good for the American workforce is no longer necessarily the same as what is good for the U.S. corporation."

More than 20 percent of U.S. firms' output is now produced by foreign workers on foreign soil. A majority (55 percent) of IBM's global employees now are not Americans. IBM Japan, with more than 18,000 Japanese employees, is one of Japan's major exporters of computers. Once U.S. jobs moving offshore were just low-wage, low-skill ones, Reich notes, but no longer. Texas Instruments has a software development office in Bangalore, its 50 Indian programmers linked by satellite with TI's Dallas headquarters. U.S. firms increased spending on research and development overseas by 33 percent in 1986–88—and by only six percent at home.

Much of what U.S. firms produce abroad is exported back to the United States. In fact, Reich says, that process accounts for about one-fourth of America's trade deficit. "When offshore production is taken into account, U.S. firms are no less competitive than they were in the 1960s," he believes. U.S. firms still have about the same share of global exports as they did 25 years ago—17 percent.

Foreign firms, meanwhile, now own more than 13 percent of America's manufacturing assets and employ more than eight percent of America's manufacturing workers—about three million Americans. In 1987–90, while the Big Three U.S. automakers were laying off 9,000 employees, foreign firms were hiring more than 12,000 U.S. autoworkers.

Although American shareholders do benefit from the global successes of U.S. firms, the standard of living of Americans "depends far more on what it is that they can *do* than it does on the assets they own. And what they are able to do depends, in turn, on the education and training they receive." Global corporations can give Americans good jobs that involve valuable training and experience. But American "control" of a particular global corporation, Reich says, is no guarantee that the corporation will give *Americans* good jobs. In today's global economy, "corporations are becoming global entities that are only loosely linked to nations, if at all. The U.S. competitive future depends on the one factor of production that is rooted at home: our workforce." Measures to promote U.S. competitiveness that fail to recognize this fact, he says, "may end up jeopardizing the real standard of living of Americans instead of enhancing it."

Meddling Works

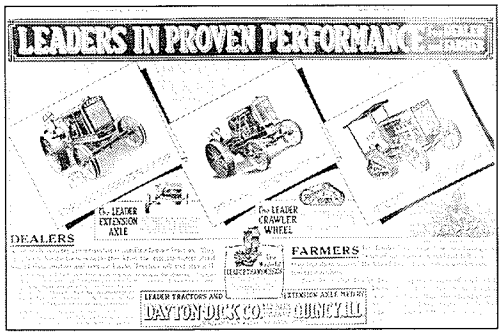
"New Deal Regulation and the Revolution in American Farm Productivity: A Case Study of the Diffusion of the Tractor in the Corn Belt, 1920–1940" by Sally Clarke, in *The Journal of Economic History* (Mar. 1991), 211 Watkins Home, Hall Ctr. for the Humanities, Univ. of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas 66045.

Many Americans have come to believe that government interference with market forces always hinders economic growth. Clarke, a historian at the University of Texas, has come up with a case to the contrary: New Deal intervention in the agricultural economy.

To be sure, by setting prices and restricting farm production Washington "distorted commodity markets and saddled taxpayers with the large cost of annual subsidies," she notes. But it also reduced the financial barriers that had been preventing many farmers from buying tractors and other costly labor-saving inventions. After having grown by only 0.5 percent annually in the three decades before 1930, farm productivity increased by three percent a year from 1935 to 1975.

Large numbers of farmers began buying tractors during World War I, and by 1929, nearly a quarter of all the farmers in the Corn Belt possessed them. But for every farmer who had a tractor then, Clarke calculates, there was another for whom it would have made economic sense to own one but who nevertheless did not. This gap was not closed until 1939.

The tractor, which retailed for about $1,000, was an expensive machine to the Midwestern farmers. Many hesitated during the 1920s to invest in one—and thus passed up potential gains in productivity—because they wanted to save their cash to protect themselves against the sudden price drops then common in the unstable commodity markets. Farmers could borrow the money for a tractor, of course, but, even before the Depression, many younger farmers were indebted—and some faced a terrible cash-flow bind.



Although not all they might have been, tractor sales still flourished in the 1920s, as farmers discovered the machine's advantages.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Congress, responding to the great crisis of the Depression, established the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) and other regulatory agencies in 1933 to restore farm prosperity. Changing the investment situation for farmers was not the programs' intent, but it was a consequence, nevertheless. While the AAA paid farmers to restrict production, the Commodity Credit Corporation set minimum prices for corn and wheat, and by so doing freed farmers from having to worry so much about a collapse in prices. "Instead, they were free to invest in the tractor based on its efficiency," Clarke says. And the Farm Credit Administration lessened the burden of farmers' existing debts and offered low interest rates for new loans. Whereas interest payments had consumed as much as 11 percent of farmers' income earlier in the decade, they dropped to less than five percent of income by 1935.

Farmers took advantage of the changed investment climate to buy new equipment. Sales of tractors, which had plummeted from 137,000 in 1929 to 25,000 in 1932, swelled to 174,000 annually in 1936–39. Thanks to New Deal intervention, farmers bought more readily during the Great Depression the expensive invention they had delayed buying in the 1920s, thereby giving farm productivity a lift with historic consequences.

SOCIETY

'Correct' Suppression

"A Quiet Threat to Academic Freedom" by James S. Coleman, in *National Review* (Mar. 18, 1991), 150 E. 35th St., New York, N.Y. 10016.

Whence comes the most serious threat to academic freedom? According to University of Chicago sociologist James S. Coleman, it comes not from craven university administrators or a philistine public, nor even from "politically correct" students, but from the very highest priests of the temples of learning—the professors. "There are taboos on certain topics," he says, and when the taboos are violated, "one's own colleagues" impose sanctions. Research on "inappropriate" questions is suppressed—often in advance by the researcher himself.

Among the foremost taboos confronting sociologists, Coleman says, are "those concerning questions of differences between genders or differences among races which might be genetic in origin." Inquiries into homosexuality that start with the premise that it is "less natural" than heterosexuality also are forbidden.

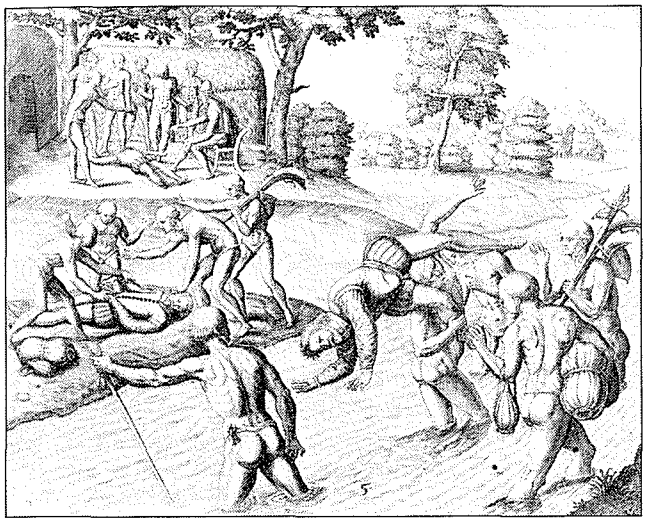
Coleman, whose own research during the 1960s on race and schooling was extremely influential, offers a personal example of self-censorship. The study he directed for the then-U.S. Office of Education—the famous Coleman Report of 1966—indicated (among other things) that black children did better in schools whose students were predominantly middle-class. *That* finding was widely cited by plaintiffs in school desegregation cases. But the research uncovered something else: Students' verbal achievement was related to their teachers' performance on vocabulary tests. *This* attracted scant attention, even though it might well have had an important implication. Black teachers from the South's formerly segregated systems were generally "less well prepared, less qualified, with lower verbal skills, than their white counterparts." Black teachers, in short, might not be good for black students. Because of this uncomfortable possibility, Coleman and his colleagues did not pursue the question. And that, he says, may have contributed to "the sacrifice of educational opportunity for many children, most of them black . . . ."

In general, Coleman says, any research that would hinder policies "intended to aid the poor, or to aid blacks or Hispanics or women" is likely to win disapproval. The fact that the consequences of such policies may be quite different from the intentions behind them is why dispassionate research often meets with censure. It is also why such research is necessary. Academic communities, Coleman insists, should put a higher value on freedom of inquiry than on equality.

Dances with Romance

"Early Native North American Responses to European Contact: Romantic versus Rationalistic Interpretations" by Bruce G. Trigger, in *The Journal of American History* (Mar. 1991), 1125 Atwater St., Ind. Univ., Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

When Christopher Columbus came upon what he called San Salvador in 1492, the natives of that island thought he had fallen from the sky. As native North Americans encountered the Europeans who arrived in the century after Columbus, did they perceive them in much the same fashion? Were the Indians, in other words, utterly innocent victims whose pristine cultural and religious beliefs long prevented them from even beginning to comprehend the behavior of the rapacious white men? Some specialists have recently lent support to that view. As late as the 17th century, say a growing number of historians and anthropologists, European goods still



In this engraving from Theodore de Bry's Historia Americae sive Novi Orbis *(1596), Indians prepare to test the immortality of a Spaniard by holding him under water.*

had no practical worth—only symbolic value—to the native peoples who took them in trade. But Trigger, an anthropologist at McGill University, contends that these "romantic" interpretations do not stand up to scrutiny.

It is true that, according to Indian folk traditions, native North Americans, on first seeing European ships, believed them to be, in Trigger's words, "floating islands inhabited by supernatural spirits." These strange beings appeared with increasing frequency, giving away trinkets, carrying off natives, and leaving behind diseases.

But when the initial encounters gave way to more direct and frequent ones, Trigger argues, the native Americans before long came to see the newcomers "as human beings with whom . . . they could do business." By the beginning of the 17th century, he notes, Europeans and Indians were engaging in trade in practical goods more than in glass beads or liquor. "The first Indians who traded with Europeans may have hung metal axes and hoes on their chests as ornaments and used stockings as tobacco pouches," he says. But the Indians came to recognize that some European tools and other goods were more useful than their own. By the 1620s, the Montagnais at Tadoussac, near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, "were using large quantities of clothing, hatchets, iron arrowheads, needles, sword blades, ice picks, knives, kettles, and preserved foods that they purchased from the French." Similarly, the Mohawks, near what is now Albany, in the 1630s were buying a wide range of clothing and metalware, and the Hurons, further inland, were purchasing knives, axes, and arrowheads.

The fur-trading Hurons and their neighbors probably continued to believe in the supernatural powers of the French, Trigger says. "Yet in their eyes this did not make Europeans intrinsically different from the Indians, who were also able to practice witchcraft and whose amulets and relations with appropriate spirits enabled them to hunt, fish, and move about on snowshoes and in canoes more effectively than Europeans did." Even though the Hurons were becoming dependent on the French, the Huron chiefs felt confident they could outwit them.

In the end, of course, the Hurons and other Indians were overwhelmed. But this was not because they failed to realistically understand European behavior, Trigger says. The native Americans grasped all too well what was happening to them.

Underground Disorder

"Reclaiming the Subway" by George L. Kelling, in *NY* (Winter 1991), 42 E. 71st St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

New York City boasts the country's largest subway system—as much a symbol of the city as the bagel and the Empire State Building—and for nearly two decades now, authorities there have been trying to reclaim it for the populace. After years of

struggle, they did finally defeat the graffiti "artists." But overcoming the disorder caused by the multitudes of vagrants and hustlers who now inhabit the subways is proving far more difficult, reports Kelling, a professor of criminal justice at Northeastern University.

Although crime rates in the subways actually are lower than on the city's streets, people still are more fearful below ground, because disorderly behavior is concentrated there. The conduct of "unpredictable and obstreperous people—youths, drunks, the mentally ill, hustlers, prostitutes, and panhandlers"—frightens people. And with good reason, Kelling says. Disorder breeds serious crime (e.g., muggings and robberies), as well as fear of crime. There were 1,472 felonies reported in April 1990—compared with 1,041 two years earlier.

Authorities' first counterattack was aimed at graffiti. In the early 1980s, graffitists' logos, slogans, and portraits ("tags") covered every subway car in New York City. To most of the riding public, this signified that the subways were out of control. Although all previous efforts to rid the system of graffiti had failed, the New York City Transit Authority, then headed by David Gunn, accomplished the mission in five years. On May 12, 1989, the last graffiti-covered car was taken out of service.

This victory was won simply by frustrating graffitists' desire to have their work seen. Once a graffiti-covered subway car was cleaned and put back into regular service, it remained clean—or else it was no longer used.

But in the battle against disorder, the graffiti fight was just a skirmish. The indigents hanging out in the subways are "the single biggest obstacle to restoring public order and public confidence underground," Kelling says. "Yet in the name of

Academic Valets

Is every statesman only a venal vote-grubber, every artist only a childish egotist? That is the way our contemporary academic culture often seems to portray great men and women, comments historian Gertrude Himmelfarb. From the Jefferson Lecture she delivered in May under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Humanities:

"No man is a hero to his valet." The dictum is generally attributed to the Duke of Condé in the reign of Louis XIV. [Georg Wilhelm Friedrich] Hegel amplified it to read: "No man is a hero to his valet, not because the former is no hero, but because the latter is a valet." . . . Hegel had . . . nothing but contempt for those small-minded men, men with the souls of valets, who reduce historical individuals to their own level of sensibility and consciousness . . . . The schoolmaster looks at a historical figure and sees only a private person. He is like the valet, Hegel says, who "takes off the hero's boots, helps him into bed, knows that he prefers champagne, and the like"—and knows nothing more about him . . . .

Hegel's schoolmasters are our professors. They are the academic critics who treat the masters of literature with all the reverence of a valet, who put Shakespeare to bed, so to speak, removing his boots, taking off his clothes, tucking him in, secure in the knowledge that he is only a man like themselves, and that they can read, interpret, and "deconstruct" his plays as if they had written them—as if, to use the current jargon, he is no more "privileged" than they, as if his "authorial voice" has no more "authority" than the voice of the critic. We may also find Hegel's schoolmasters among our academic historians, who look for the essence of history not in the great events of public life but in the small events of private life, who reduce public figures to the level of private persons, who recognize no statesmen but only politicians, who see no principles in public affairs but only self-serving interests . . . .

The problem with a valet-like conception of history is not only its denigration of greatness and heroism but also its denigration of individuality and freedom . . . . Today more than ever we have reason to heed Tocqueville's words: "It is important not to let this idea [of free will] grow dim, for we need to raise men's souls, not to complete their prostration."

civil rights and compassion, advocacy groups . . . defend these people's rights to continue their disruptive behavior."

In October 1989, police and transit authorities launched an effort to get subway vagrants under control. Homeless advocates immediately objected that "'nooks and crannies' should be available for the homeless to do as they pleased, that is, to live in, and that passive panhandling should be allowed." In January 1990, a federal judge ruled that subway panhandling was a First Amendment right. The decision was later overturned, but the battle over disorder in the subways goes on. If it is lost, Kelling writes, "The ultimate victims will be the working classes and the poor—bereft of [transportation] options, but then even more vulnerable to the predations of hoodlums and thugs."

PRESS & TELEVISION

A Kind Word For TV

"The Impact of Television Viewing on Mental Aptitude and Achievement: A Longitudinal Study" by Steven L. Gortmaker, Charles A. Salter, Deborah K. Walker, and William H. Dietz, Jr., in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Winter 1990), Inst. for Social Research, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48016.

Many parents are sure that TV is rotting their children's minds. The average American youngster spends more than 15 hours a week in front of the TV set, so that would mean a lot of wasted brainpower. Not to worry, say Gortmaker, acting chairman of the Department of Behavioral Sciences at Harvard's School of Public Health, and his colleagues.

The researchers scrutinized National Health Examination Survey data on 1,745 children who were studied twice: in 1963–65, when they were ages 6–11, and then again in 1966–70, when they were 12–17. In the earlier years, the youngsters watched an average of about two hours of television a day; by the late '60s, they were watching nearly three hours a day.

At first glance, the amount of TV viewed *did* seem to be having a malign effect. Among the children 12 and older, the more TV the youths watched, the lower were their scores on intelligence, reading, and arithmetic tests. However, the causal connection turned out to be an illusion. When the children's test scores from the earlier years were taken into account, it seemed that the children who were *already* scoring low then simply tended to watch more television later. And when other pertinent factors, such as parents' socioeconomic status, were taken into account, the connection between extensive TV viewing and lowered cognitive abilities all but completely vanished.

This finding agrees with that of an extensive 1986 study of U.S. teenagers. (Other studies, which lent some support to popular fears, suffered from various shortcomings, according to Gortmaker and colleagues.) Of course, while youngsters who watch a great deal of TV may not be *losing* their minds, that doesn't rule out the possibility that they are filling them with junk.

All the Fluff That Fits

"When Readers Design the News" by Carl Sessions Stepp, in *Washington Journalism Review* (Apr. 1991), 4716 Pontiac St., College Park, Md. 20740-2493.

Newspapers are in trouble. Only 24 percent of Americans under 35 read yesterday's paper, according to a 1990 Times Mirror survey, compared with 67 percent in 1965. "Declining penetration [of the market] and declining profits are giving editors and publishers a jolt," said Seymour Topping, director of editorial devel-

Periodicals *continues on page 120*

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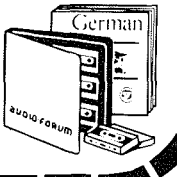

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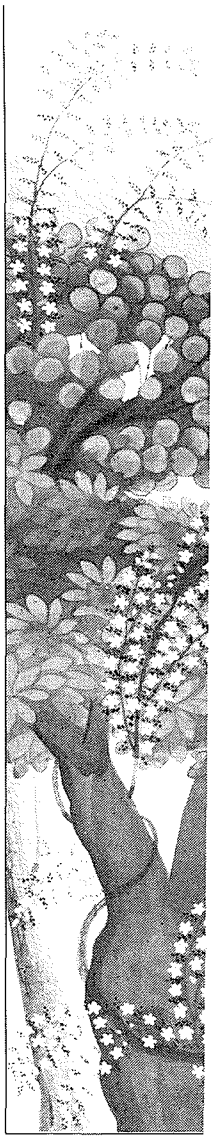
Hinduism and the Fate of India



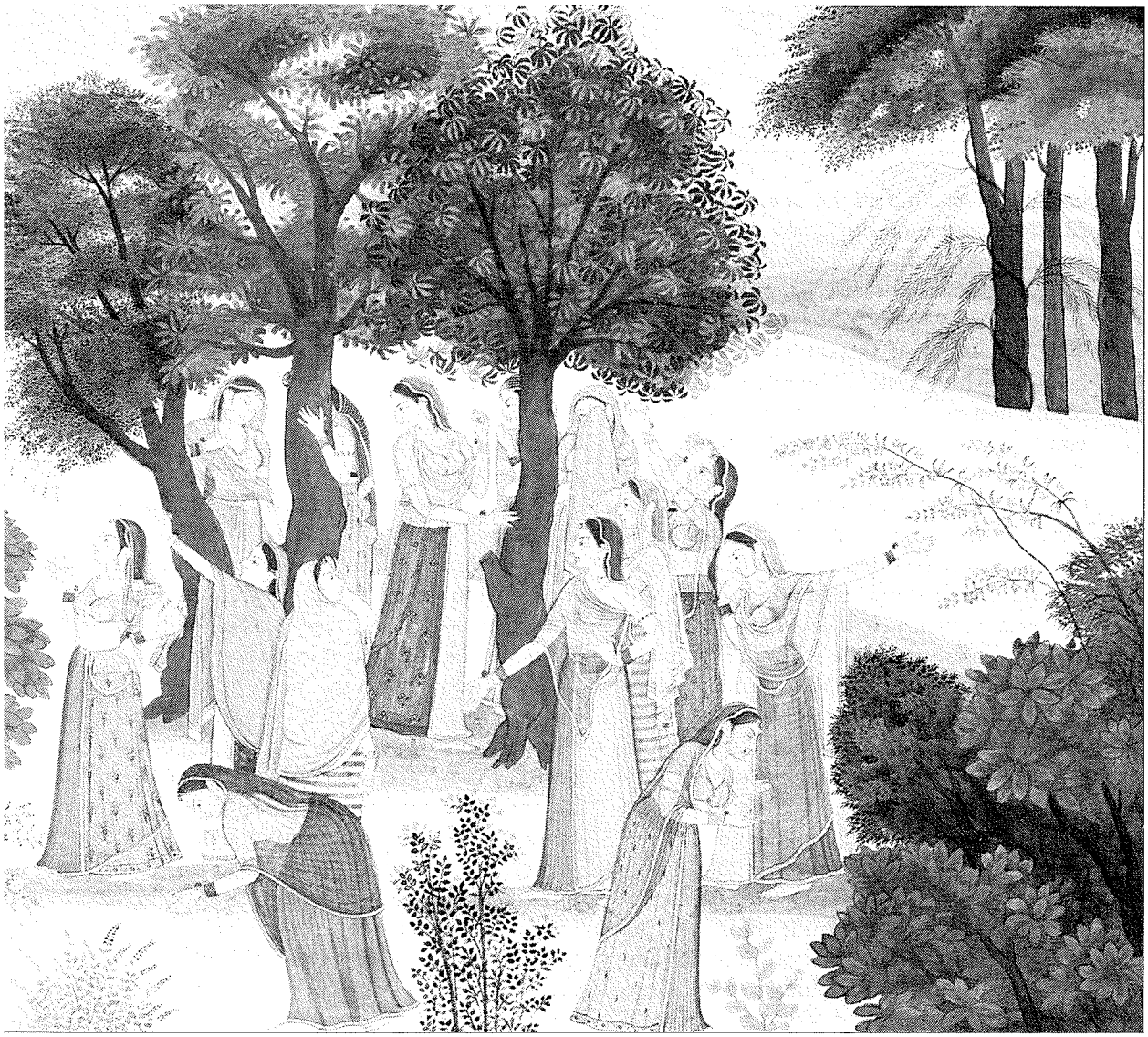
In May, only days before he was assassinated on the campaign trail, Rajiv Gandhi warned that if India's Hindu nationalists triumphed at the polls, "the country will burn." Indian democracy survived Gandhi's death and the challenge that he thought the Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) represented. But the fact remains that in India, a country founded on the secularist principles of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, the rising political force is an overtly religious one. The next election could well leave the world's largest democracy—and the Third World's boldest political experiment—under the sway of a new and unfamiliar form of religious fundamentalism.

If an Indian from a century ago could observe all of this, surprise would almost certainly be his reaction. Surprise that Hinduism, with its multitude of gods, beliefs, customs, and peoples, is now referred to so adamantly as a single faith. Surprise at who is now considered Hindu (including certain tribal groups) and who is not (such as the Sikhs). Our contributors—John Stratton Hawley, Alf Hiltebeitel, Wendy Doniger, and Prasenjit Duara—explore the creation of this new Hindu identity and the implications of the new Hindu politics for the future of India.

NAMING HINDUISM

by John Stratton Hawley

Hinduism—the word, and perhaps the reality too—was born in the 19th century, a notoriously illegitimate child. The father was middle-class and British, and the mother, of course, was India. The circumstances of the conception are not altogether clear. One heard of the "goodly habits and observances of Hindooism" in a Bengali-English grammar written in 1829, and the Reverend William Tennant had spoken of "the Hindoo system" in a book on Indian manners and history written at the beginning of the century. Yet it was not until the inex-



A 19th-century gouache showing milkmaids searching in vain for the divine Krishna. In India, gods do not remain in the "other world" but descend to Earth.

pensive handbook *Hinduism* was published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1877 that the term came into general English usage.

The author of this book was Sir Monier Monier-Williams, then Boden Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford. Monier-Williams had approached the same topic in an earlier work, *Indian Wisdom* (1875), but that book, being an introduction to Sanskrit literature, had a limited readership. *Hinduism* was more popular, for it was a volume in the Society's widely read series on "Non-Christian Religious Systems." Its very existence in that series served to set the Hindu religion on a par with Buddhism, Judaism,

Confucianism, and all the other "isms" that still figure, for better or worse, as the major building blocks in our modern conception of world religion.

Monier-Williams understood that there was a problem in this—two problems, in fact. First, the "system" he proposed to describe had an utterly "variable character." Hinduism was "all-tolerant, all-comprehensible, all-absorbing," he said, so much so that it resembled the great Indian banyan tree, whose "single stem sends out numerous branches destined to send roots to the ground and become trees themselves, till the parent stock is lost in a dense forest of its own offshoots . . . ." To the "parent stock," a majestic pantheistic creed, Monier-Williams gave the name "esoteric" Hinduism or simply Brahmanism. As the name showed, he conceived it to have been produced by Brahmans, the priestly caste that had exerted its scholarly influence over the shaping of India ever since the Indo-European Aryans descended upon the subcontinent during the second millennium B.C.* As for the branches of his banyan tree, the "popular side of the same creed," these Monier-Williams called "exoteric" Hinduism or just plain Hinduism, for short. His distinction between a religious core and a periphery—between learned and popular, between higher and lower—had long been a leitmotif in European thinking about religion. Monier-Williams furnished names that made realities of both sides of the split in Hinduism, instead of suggesting, as many of his predecessors had, that one aspect was really more than religion (philosophy) while the other was really less (superstition).

These very names, however, constituted Monier-Williams' second problem, and it is to his credit that he perceived it. As he candidly admitted, Brahmanism and Hinduism "are not names recognized by the natives." They were 19th-century English neologisms that had parallels in other European tongues but no place in any Indic language. In Hindi, one of India's major languages, it would not be until the early 20th century that a real parallel to "Hinduism" could be found—the word *hindutva* (Hinduness, Hinduism)—and this term was patently an ideological and political invention, a tool in India's nationalist movement. It was created for a pamphlet literature supporting rallies where Indians of various stripes attempted to forge a common Hindu identity by training with staves, as in traditional Hindu gymnasia, and marching in khaki shorts, in the fashion of the British police force in India. The shorts aptly symbolized the derivative element in this new "Hinduism": The raw material and the idea of a half-size pant may have been Indian, but the cut, definition, and standard ritual usage came from Europe.

The word "Hindu" is much older than "Hinduism," but it too is a bit of a stranger in India itself. Though the Greeks knew a version of the word (*hindoi*), it was apparently first used as a religious term by the Muslim invaders who entered India early in the second millennium A.D. to designate the practices of people they found living in the region of the Indus River. These people—Hindus—were simply Indians, natives. Hindus themselves were slow to take up the term, and, when they did, it was with a similar purpose: to

*The Indo-Europeans were tribes who spoke related languages and occupied the pastureland between the Caspian and Black seas. Their dispersal from that region around 2000 B.C. sent some tribes as far west as England and Ireland while the easternmost or Indo-Aryan tribes eventually crossed the Hindu Kush mountains to the Indus Valley.

John Stratton Hawley *is professor and chair of the Department of Religion at Barnard College. He is the author of* Krishna, the Butter Thief *(1983) and the editor of* Saints and Virtues *(1987) and, with Mark Jeurgensmeyer, of* Songs of the Saints of India *(1988).*

distinguish themselves from outsiders, especially Muslims (or "Turks" as they tended to say). Even in the 16th century, 500 years after the Muslim conquerors had come, the term Hindu was rarely used—certainly never in Sanskrit or in any even vaguely scriptural document—and when it was, its range was such that it would have embraced Buddhists and Jains as well as the people we today would call Hindus.

At the beginning of the 19th century a coterie of upper-class Bengalis who had regular contact with the British (including Ram Mohun Roy, the so-called "father of modern India") began to use the word in roughly its modern sense, preferring it to "Gentoo," which was equally popular in British usage and was derived through the Portuguese, from the word "gentile," meaning heathen. Yet it was only much later in the 19th century that it became commonplace for Hindus to respond to questions about their religious identity by using the term "Hindu." It was the official British census, a basic reflex of enlightened empire-building, that created the need for such a response, and many Indians gave it amid confusion, or not at all. Low-caste and Untouchable leaders resisted being lumped together under the rubric "Hindu" because real political and economic gains were at stake: The British had inaugurated a system of government designed to give representation to various religious and ethnic communities. During the censuses of the 1920s and '30s, following an earlier example set by Sikhs, these leaders urged their followers to answer the religion question with a firm "We are not Hindus!" Even those who were content to have themselves described as Hindu did so with little conviction: Hindus were what was left after others—Muslims, Untouchables, Christians, Sikhs, and so forth—had set themselves apart.

Hinduism in a Eurocentric mirror. This fanciful Westernized engraving from 1672, truer to Indian views than most, illustrates the 10 incarnations of Vishnu.

After Independence (1947), when the word became truly common, this pattern persisted. Already in the early 20th century leaders such as Sri Aurobindo and Mohandas Gandhi had articulated versions of Hindu nationalism, but it is probably safe to say that Indians began to think of themselves as Hindus more because of the creation of Pakistan in 1947, which was by charter a country for Muslims, than because of anything intrinsic to their own religious identity. Even today Hindus are apt to describe themselves by sect (as Vaishnavas, say) or caste-groupings (as Nagar Brahmans, for example) rather than to call

themselves Hindus, and the term *hindutva* has a still more arcane ring. Likewise the phrase *hindu dharma* ("Hindu religion"), which has become conventional in certain sorts of official and public literature, tends to function as a call to the battlements rather than as a simple designation of fact.

So there has been little Hindu about Hinduism, this supposedly ancient religion, until very recent times. Hindus had a concept of India as sacred space and they had histories and epics that established their complex common ancestry, but they never developed a concept of themselves as a society unified by religion. To the contrary, the Hindu idea of *dharma*—of right conduct in conformity to ultimate laws—typically insisted upon distinctions between various groups.

Hinduism originated as a European term, not an Indian one, and it may be significant that Europeans living in Europe, not the many Europeans who lived in India during the 19th century, were most responsible for crediting it. It served as a component in a conceptual map that was of far greater use in expansionist, imperialist Europe than in Asia itself. At the same time, however, it represented the consolidation of a tradition of scholarship that was some three centuries old by the time Monier-Williams spoke *ex cathedra* from Oxford, and most of that tradition did indeed grow up in the Indian subcontinent. Today we call this tradition Orientalism, probably with a pejorative twist, but that too is a term with a history, and the first practitioners would have been very surprised to hear themselves referred to in such a way.

* * *

In the English-speaking world, Sir William Jones is often thought of as the first true Orientalist. By founding the Asiatic Society of Bengal and its journal *Asiatick Researches* in 1784, Jones created the first forum for systematic Western scholarship about India.

Yet the roots of Orientalism go deeper: Roberto de Nobili, a Jesuit missionary of the early 17th century and a remarkably colorful figure, may deserve to be called the first European Orientalist of India. Scion of a Tuscan noble family that produced two popes, nephew of a precocious cardinal whose name he inherited, born into the temporal and spiritual aristocracy of Rome, Nobili forsook it all to board a Portuguese ship bound for Goa in 1604. Sailing onward around the tip of India, he received permission from his Jesuit superior to travel inland and set himself up in the Tamil city of Madurai, which was venerated as South India's foremost center of Brahman learning.

Nobili's purpose was, as his superior put it, "to open a door for the conversion of those Gentiles who are remarkable for their ability, judgment, and sense of honor." His approach to Indian society was unabashedly elitist. He ignored most of the crazy quilt of Hindu life. Rather, Nobili began with the class he took as corresponding most closely to his own: the spiritual aristocracy of learned (but not necessarily wealthy or temporally powerful) Brahmans. In explaining himself to his Brahman peers, he emphasized his own fine education and noble birth. He denied that he was a foreigner (*parangi*) in the sense to which they had become accustomed—that is, a Portuguese—depicting himself instead as a Roman monk, a religious ascetic (*sanyasi*). He had come to Madurai as a pilgrim, he said, and for penance, but had decided to stay. This information he published in a Tamil-language manifesto that he tacked to a tree in front of his house.

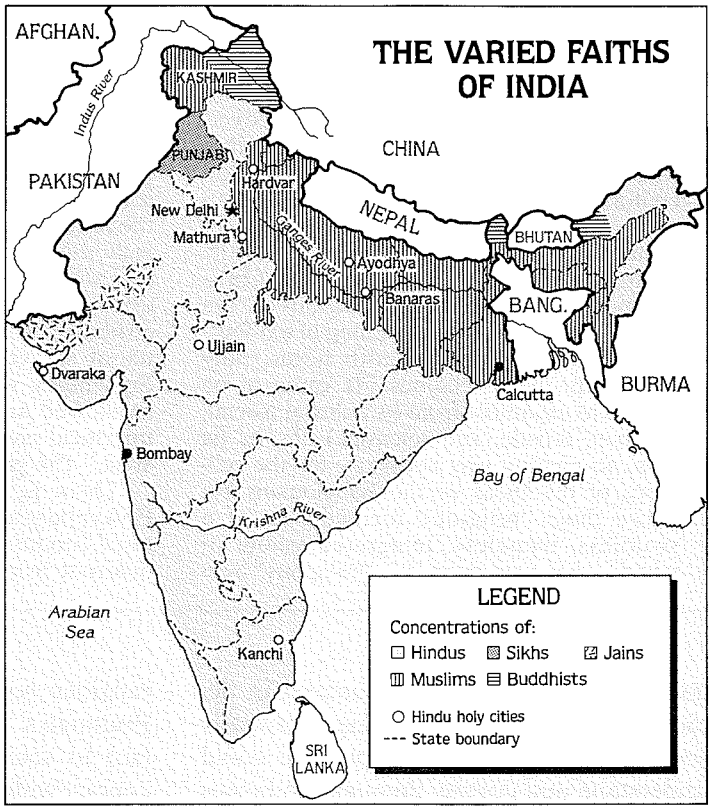
Nobili acted out his analogies. He adopted a Brahman diet (no eggs, no meat, a Brahman cook); he received permission

from his Jesuit superior to refrain from touching members of the lowly castes; he wore a long saffron-colored ascetic's "toga," carried a mendicant's staff and water-gourd, and painted the ashen marks of Shiva on his forehead. In justifying these practices to his superior, he cited the success in China of Jesuits who had adopted the dress of the Mandarins. And as would befit the first Orientalist, he learned Sanskrit, which he saw as the Latin of India.

All this constituted his own *apologia* to the Brahmans of Madurai, but in several of his written works he performed the same gesture in reverse, defending Brahman ways to Europeans. Three centuries earlier his Venetian countryman Marco Polo had perceived the Brahmans of Tamil Nadu as "enchanters" who uttered incantations and spells for a price to make the pearl divers of the Coromandel coast confident in the face of danger. Nobili, by contrast, depicted them as scholars, not priests, and went so far as to call himself an Italian Brahman (*Brachmanem Italum*) when addressing the pope. He portrayed the Brahmans not as mystifiers but as interpreters of law and of the sciences.

Marco Polo had described the idolatrous habits of the Indians he observed—in particular, their dressing and feeding of images—whereas Nobili attempted to distinguish between the highest echelon of Brahman scholars and those who officiated in the temples. The former were held by their countrymen to be "perfect," he says—"proficient in the sciences" and "given to the contemplation of the true God." But even the idolaters (*idololatrae*), whom he classified into sects such as Shaivas and Vaishnavas, came off well. Nobili endeavored to show how aspects of "the law of Christ," including the mystery of the Holy Trinity, were embedded in "the laws of the idolaters," so idolaters were "not to be altogether condemned." It was a remarkable effort of cultural and religious translation.

Several features of Nobili's effort deserve particular attention. First, both in life and in scholarship, he characteristically situated the doctrines of those he studied in their social context. This served his apolo-



In India there are many faiths and many variations within *Hinduism. For example, Shaivite (Shiva-worshipping) sects predominate in the far north, in the south near Kanchi, and near Bombay. And castes, numbering more than 3,000, divide India in other ways.*

OF CAMPHOR AND COCONUTS

Of all the world's religious traditions, none has been more closely scrutinized for its fissures than "Hinduism." Put simply, it is now fashionable to argue that there is no such thing.

Two prominent scholars, Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Robert E. Frykenberg, have been instrumental in establishing the idea that it was not just the history of Hinduism that was invented by outsiders but its very identity. It is worth looking at the work of Smith and Frykenberg to see whether the idea of "Hinduism" is as fragile and recent as contemporary scholarship suggests.

Smith, who until recently headed the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University, inspired an influential school of comparative religion. In *The Meaning and the End of Religion* (1962), he attributes the coinage of the term "Hindu" to the consequences of the Muslim invasions of North India beginning in A.D. 1001. Originally, "Hindu" defined not a religion but a geographical attribute of all non-Muslim peoples south and east of the Indus River: that is, in "Hindustan." Smith argues that Hinduism as a distinct religion was a 19th-century construct, as were most other "Eastern" religions or "isms." The single exception was Islam, which named itself, distinguishing itself from Judaism and Christianity, its fellow Abrahamic religions of "the Book." The 19th-century naming of the Eastern "isms" occurred, Smith notes, only when a people's religious life came to be treated as separable from its cultural (social, political, artistic, and scientific) life. As he says, no naming was necessary for the religions of the Incas or the Babylonians because their "religion" formed part of a seamless, nameless, integrated whole in which what was done for "religious" reasons was virtually inseparable from what was done for, say, economic reasons.

Smith argues that this 19th-century naming process followed a "trend toward reification" of religion, in which faith in God was replaced by an allegiance to newly named "things," the religions themselves. Smith finds it important that Hinduism provides no good equivalent to the Western term "religion," but then he fails to note that this is equally true for his concept of "faith." Smith would like to argue, for example, that the *varna* system of social classes is "an expression of faith," but no one else writing on the subject has ever made that argument. More generally, Smith states, "Hinduism" is "not a unity and does not aspire to be." He admits, however, that "classical Hindus were inhibited by no lack of . . . [group] self-consciousness." Such self-consciousness, however, implies some unity after all.

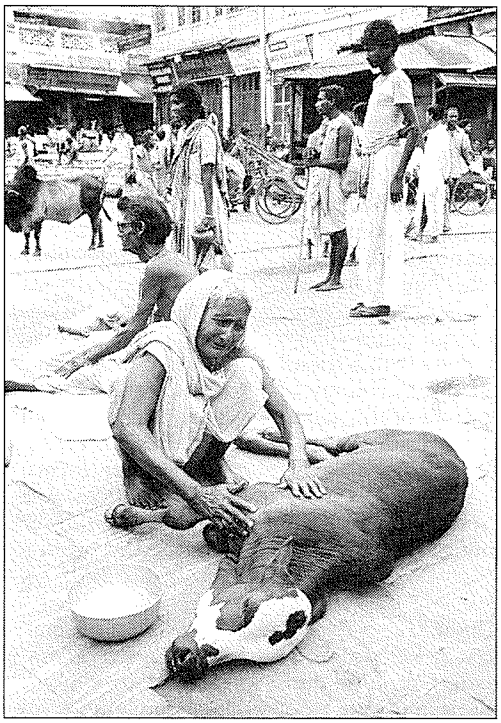
Robert Frykenberg, a historian at the University of Wisconsin, carries these arguments even further. In the anthology *Hinduism Reconsidered* (1989), Frykenberg argues that present-day, so-called Hinduism is quite different from the Indian religious past that it supposedly incorporates. For Frykenberg, the term Hinduism is not so much theologically misleading (as it was in Smith's view) but politically dangerous and intellectually erroneous. Political interests in India have attributed to modern Hinduism the character of a "world religion"—"a character," Frykenberg writes, "which is all too easily swallowed and then certified by naive and uncritical savants of oriental religions in the West." The gauntlet has been thrown down.

There is, indeed, much to be said for Frykenberg's position. The reified, politicized Hinduism he speaks of is a reality. It is different from what preceded it and what

getic ends, for if he could succeed in depicting the Brahmans as playing a primarily social role, not a religious one, he could understand and portray them as candidates for initiation into the higher law of Christ. Though making up less than 10 percent of the population, the Brahmans typically performed all major religious functions, and religious regulations shaped much of the Brahman's life from diet (usually vegetarian) to social activity (severely restricted contact with lower castes) to profession (no plowing or handling of impure materials like leather). Yet Nobili tended to downplay such religious underpinnings and instead attributed the Brahmans' prominence to

surrounds it in its contemporary milieu. But the fact that many current Hindu movements have strong, and even dangerous, political overtones is not in itself a sufficient reason to toss out the concept of Hinduism.

Although scholars have dissected the idea of a single Hinduism, its image as one of the world's great religions remains popularly accepted. In books on the world's religions, Hinduism is readily defined, indeed much as the earlier Orientalists defined it—as a religion united intellectually by the age-old Vedas, socially by the four classes of castes (*varnas*), and spiritually by the laws of *dharma/karma* which govern the transmigration of souls. Frykenberg argues that this textbook definition has "been made to encompass everything from the philosophical and the ritual features of the cosmic order in all its highest sophistication to the bloodiest, crudest, meanest, and most savage practices of the most primitive peoples." Indeed, he laments, "blood sacrifices" and "blood rituals"—such as the offering of goats and bulls—continued after 1817 under the British and are allowed to continue today under India's present state governments.



Cows, because they give milk and ask no recompense, are nearly sacred symbols of purity and motherhood. Hindus allow them to roam in temples and even in their homes.

Frykenberg, like others, recognizes the impossibility of defining Hinduism by "essentials." Here Frykenberg disregards a modern scholarly truism: Hinduism has no orthodoxy, but only orthopraxy (correct practice). A Hindu need not define himself by a statement of beliefs or by allegiance to a set of doctrines (as Smith would have it) or even by a response to the government census. What defines a Hindu is his or her practices. Many Hindus, for example, are united by the rituals of coconuts and camphor. Some Hindus break coconuts to symbolize the offering of one's head to the deities. Likewise, they light camphor to wave before the temple deity as the medium through which their offerings are carried to the gods.

Frykenberg tries to expose the futility of defining a Hindu by asking whether the participation of Muslims or Christians at Hindu temples and festivals "makes them Hindus?" The point, however, is that these events would not even occur if Christians and Muslims were the only people involved. It is the

their noble birth and their being the seekers and custodians of the truth.

Second, he attempted, on the basis of what we today might call field work, to undo the preconceptions about India that were inherited from classical times. Since the time of Herodotus India had symbolized life at the edge of the known world—vast, complex, confused, and fabulous. Nobili tried, by contrast, to find direct analogies between what was familiar to him at home and what he found in Madurai.

Third, Nobili established a double distinction in regard to Brahmans. On the one hand he made the common observation that the Brahmans were the cognoscenti of

practices (including the building and maintaining of the temples) themselves that are Hindu. And we may as well face it, so are the majority of the people who keep such temples and festivals going. If you ask why these people perform the rites the way they do, you will almost invariably hear that they do it because their ancestors did it or because it is custom, not because it fulfills some doctrine or teaching. The meaningful question, then, is not "who is a Hindu?" but "what are the things that Hindus do?"

I recently attended a large multi-village festival for a South Indian deity with a friend of mine, Lee Weissman of the University of Chicago. Lee was asked by one of the young men in the crowd. "Are you Hindu?"

"No," he answered, "I am a Jew."

"Is a Jew a Hindu?"

"Well, they do many similar things."

"Do you break coconuts and light camphor?"

"No," Lee answered.

"Then you're not a Hindu."

Here we have, I think, a rather profound folk definition of Hinduism. One differentiates Hindus by what they do and don't do: They break coconuts and light camphor; they do not light candles or candelabras, or offer lambs or doves.

In *Hinduism Reconsidered*, anthropologist Gabriella Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi argues that "it is not necessary to abandon the term Hinduism or deny it the status of a religion. What should be abandoned instead is the conviction that all concepts can be defined . . . [with] clear-cut boundaries." She turns helpfully to the philosopher Wittgenstein's notion that certain concepts may be held together by a "family resemblance," by a "complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing." Such concepts "cannot be defined but only exemplified." Recall our coconuts and camphor as exemplifications of Hinduism. Lawrence Babb, in *Redemptive Encounters* (1986), points to a similar family resemblance in what are on the surface highly distinct Hindu religious movements. And he reminds us that "Hindus mean something when they call themselves that, and what they mean goes deeper than mere matters of subcontinental politics or cultural chauvinism."

Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi introduces the idea of "prototypes" in Hinduism, referring to those features that recur most prominently and frequently in the crisscrossed Hindu fabric. Pilgrimage, asceticism, and vegetarianism are good examples that she cites. Sacrifice is clearly another such prototype, despite Frykenberg's disparagement of its bloodier forms. Not all Hindus follow such practices, and they are not unique to Hindus. But they each have a distinctive frequency and prestige, and, I would add, style within the Indian context that marks them as Hindu.

While one can agree with Frykenberg and other scholars who lament some of the misuses to which the name Hinduism has been put, there are good reasons to resist their conclusions. In Hinduism, we are faced with a deep and diverse tradition, one that cannot be expected to rethink the name it wants to call itself, no matter how recent the name may be.

—Alf Hiltebeitel

Alf Hiltebeitel, *a former Wilson Center Fellow, is professor of religion at The George Washington University. He is the author of* The Ritual of Battle: Krishna in the *Mahabharata (1976) and* The Cult of Draupadi *(Vol. I, 1988; Vol. II to be published by University of Chicago later this year) and the editor of* Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees *(1989).*

India, the carriers of its learned and religious traditions. So while Brahmans were primarily a hereditary group, one could also speak of "the Brahmans of the Buddhist or atheist school" and, as we have seen, Italian ones too. On the other hand, Nobili noted the difference between Brahmans who were *gnanis*, "wise men," and those who were "idolaters" involved in cultic life. Nobili then articulated something like the distinction between center and periphery or high and low that was to become critical for Monier-Williams.

Finally, and most obvious, Nobili's main object of concern was not the religion of the Hindus—as far as I know, he did not

use the term—but of the Brahmans. What he was concerned with was aligning two traditions of learning, the Christian and the Brahman, so that they might converge. Other missionaries and travelers had understood the Brahmans' sacred thread and boxlike forehead mark as the insignia of idolatry, but for Nobili they were symbols of learning. He himself assumed them happily, hoping thereby to solidify a bond that would make it possible for him to teach his Brahman acquaintances "the lost Veda," the Christian Veda; and by teaching them, teach the rest of Indian society as well.

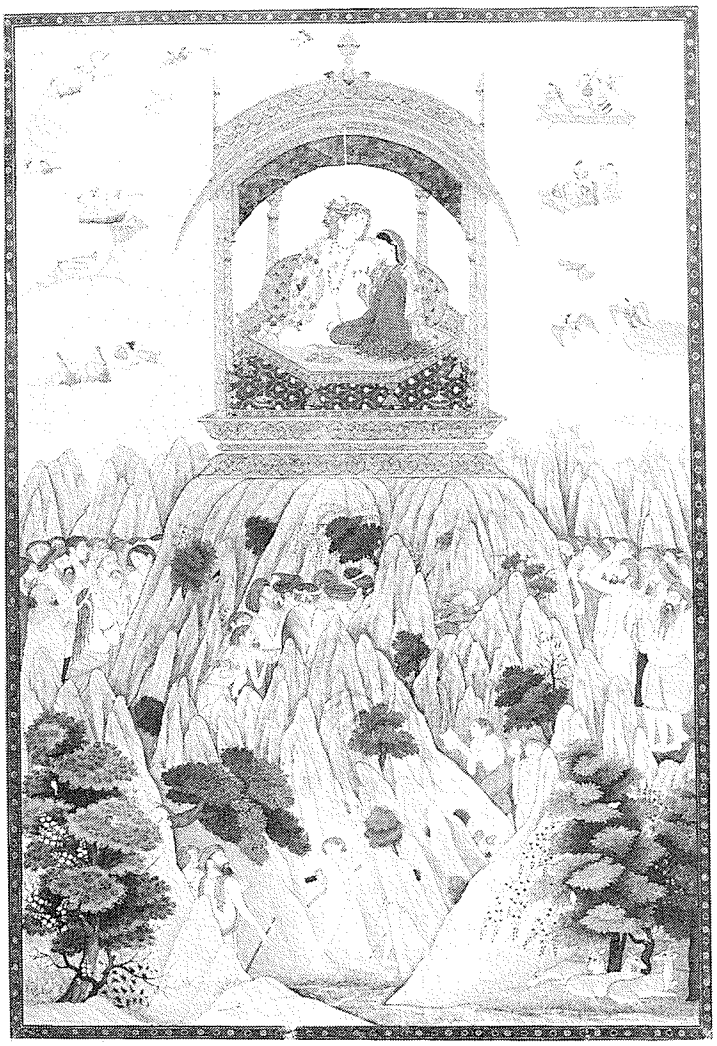
* * *

The next major phase in Europe's naming of Hinduism came with the Enlightenment. Yet just as important themes in the Catholic Reformation paled before Roberto de Nobili's immediate missionary preoccupations, so were broad Enlightenment motifs muted by the local concerns of British Orientalist scholarship in Bengal in the 18th century. Take, for example, Nathaniel Halhed, who published a *Code of Gentoo Laws* in 1776 and was therefore, in a sense, the Nobili of his time. Halhed created this document not to fill a chapter in some great encyclopedia but to meet the practical needs of his superior in the British East India Company, the governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings. In his Judicial Plan of 1772, Hastings had called for what Halhed termed "a new system of government" that would make it possible for British administrators to deal with Indian litigation on the basis of local canons. These were understood to be based in the Qur'an so far as Muslims were concerned and in the "Shaster," that is, the *dharmashastra* ("treatises on duty"), when the issue concerned Hindus. Notably, then, it was a comparison with Islam—Muslims had ruled Bengal before the British displaced them—that suggested the terms by which a summary of Hindu institutions began to be drawn up.

The naming of Hinduism in its late 18th-century phase was thus again dictated by European needs—in particular, the need to rule. But now it was northern Europe rather than Italian or Portuguese, and Protestant—or worse, Deist!—rather than Catholic concerns that shaped the comprehension of Hinduism.

Meanwhile in Europe, during the Enlightenment, intellectuals were engaged in a new public debate about the status of Christianity in relation to other religious traditions. As Europe's trade and colonies spread throughout the world, its educated classes had become especially intrigued—in part through Jesuit reporting—by traditions that appeared to represent standards of rationality and social organization that rivalled those of the West. On the whole, Europe's self-confidence remained unshaken, but knowledge of the achievements of China and then India did have an effect.

For someone like Halhed there was no *crise de confiance*, at least not in the earlier, more productive part of his life. Here was a man from a prominent mercantile family, who had trained at Harrow, written farces with Richard Sheridan when they were students at Oxford, and cut quite the figure among the ladies of Calcutta (some of them already married). His approach was even-handed and secure: He wished to give "a precise idea of the customs and manners of these people which, to their great injury, have long been misrepresented in the Western world," lest his countrymen, in their vanity, try to reconcile "every other mode of worship in some kind of conformity with our own." He deplored the popular idea that Asians were more inclined to violence than Europeans and hoped to correct this notion by publishing a digest of Indian law. As for Hindu religion, like all religion, it



Hindu gods are full of contradictions. Shiva—shown with his divine consort, Parvati—embodies fertility (he devised 84 million sexual positions) and *asceticism, yet is also lord of destruction.*

was to be understood as a stage on the upward road from barbarism to science.

Other British students of Hindu manners and doctrine felt differently. John Zephaniah Holwell was a surgeon in the East India Company who took an active interest in Indian civil affairs. He contributed to the Deist discovery of Hinduism and thus brought Hinduism into the great debate about the status of the Christian Church. His first major work—*Interesting Historical Events, relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan . . . As also the Mythology and Cosmogony, Fasts and Festivals of the Gentoos, followers of the Shastah*—created quite a stir when it was published in 1765. It was swiftly translated into German and French; Voltaire had read it in the original by 1767; and it was to have a lasting impact on Orientalist scholarship.

Halhed had proposed a common source of Indo-European language and religion, but Holwell believed that India itself was the source from which the others sprang. He believed that the "original principles, religious and moral, of the ancient Brahmans" included a belief in the immortality of the soul and in a single, eternal God long before the time of Moses or Jesus Christ. (Indeed, according to Holwell, Jewish and Christian monotheism and belief in immortality are descended from the Brahman religion.) Holwell maintained, similarly, that Pythagoras had learned the doctrine of metempsychosis, the migration of souls, by visiting India.

An interesting facet of Holwell's position is that he seems to have believed that he had at one time been in possession of the oldest extant texts in which these original principles were inscribed. Alas, the manuscripts were destroyed when Calcutta was sacked by the Muslim ruler of Bengal in 1756. Holwell summarized his "Shastah"

in such a way that it sounded like an earlier, brahmanical version of the Christian doctrine of the Fall, replete with a final judgment and angels good and bad. On the good side were the major Hindu deities Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, while their enemies (Ravana, for example, the villain in the *Ramayana*) stood in for Lucifer and Beelzebub. In all likelihood, however, Holwell's "Shastah" was not some ancient Sanskrit text, as he believed, but a relatively recent document. It is ironic that Holwell, who was to become one of the great challengers of Christian truth, did so in large part on the basis of documents he accepted as brahmanical; in truth they stood quite outside the general edifice of Brahman learning.

No matter. Holwell's "Shastah," along with the *Ezour-Vedam*, a French document which was fabricated out of whole cloth probably with the intention of having Jesuits use it in converting natives, made a deep impression on Voltaire. He subscribed eagerly to Holwell's conclusions, pointing out that they established the Brahmans as several centuries older even than the Chinese Confucians. Christianity, he informed Frederick the Great, was entirely founded on *"l'antique religion de Brama."* And thus was joined one of the great debates of the Enlightenment, with the anti-Christian side being taken up more characteristically on the Continent than in sober Britain.

Whichever side of the debate one embraced, by the end of the 18th century most educated Europeans had come to accept a series of points about Indian religion quite unlike what had been believed earlier, when India was still primarily a land of mystery and dark idolatry. First, "the doctrine of Brihma," as Halhed called it, was understood to be unusually tolerant (except in relation to the women of its own society, who were subject to *suttee*, cremation on their husband's funeral pyre). Second, the doctrine possessed two levels: the idolatrous, which could now be interpreted not just as crass paganism but as behavior of a symbolic sort, and more exaltedly, the monotheist. Third, "the doctrine of Brihma" affirmed the immortality of the soul by teaching metempsychosis. Fourth, that doctrine embraced a series of moral principles that were held at least by some European minds to be the rival of those endorsed in the Christian West. And finally, this system bore a real relation to Semitic—and specifically Christian—religion.

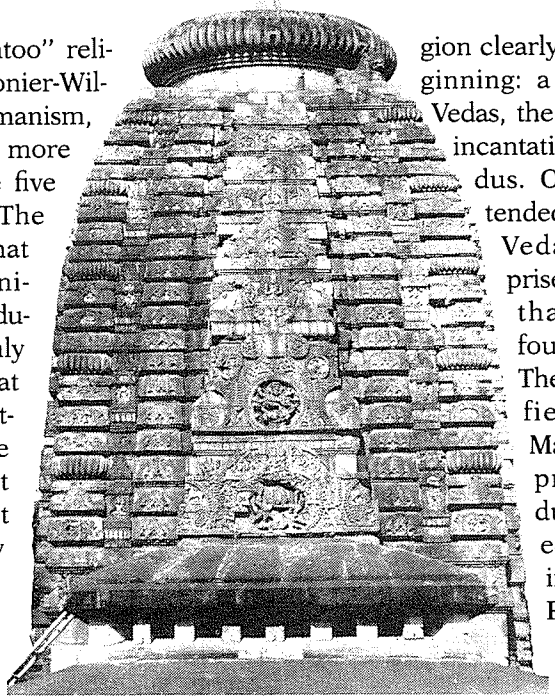
When Henry David Thoreau, halfway through the 19th century, stepped into a life of seclusion at Walden Pond, he took with him a copy of that major Hindu religious text, the Bhagavad Gita, along with this entire set of conceptions about Hindu religion. There, at the end of winter, his silent isolation was broken by a hundred workers cutting Walden's ice into chunks that would be exported to Madras and Bombay and Calcutta. As the ice-cutters labored, Thoreau imagined a more fundamental connection that linked the Ganges with his own pond and indeed his own well.

> In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial . . . .I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I met the servant of the Brahman . . . come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.

Seven centuries after Marco Polo, Thoreau and other Westerners had come to see "the doctrine of Brihma" as equal to the best that Christendom had yet produced.

As Thoreau's appropriation of it would suggest, most of the 18th-century Oriental-

ist description of "Gentoo" religion depicted what Monier-Williams was to call Brahmanism, a philosophical system more or less laid out in the five points listed above. The "popular religion" that Monier-Williams dignified with the title Hinduism in 1877 was mainly ignored. It is true that Holwell made some attempt to catalogue "fasts and festivals," but on the whole it was not until the 19th century that this aspect became a regular feature in scholarly descriptions of Hinduism. Only then did "Hinduism" fully emerge before European eyes—just at the time, paradoxically, when some of the most influential Indian interpreters of the subject were eager to subtract such practices from their tradition.



Hindu architecture has its own language. This 7th-century A.D. temple tower in Orissa, India, resembles a mountain, home of the gods.

A major historical change had occurred in India in the century between Holwell's *Interesting Historical Events* and the publication of Monier-Williams's *Hinduism* in 1877. By the time Monier-Williams wrote, the British hold on India had assumed the proportions of empire, and their cataloguing of native castes, tribes, and sects was well under way. Especially influential was Horace Hayman Wilson's *Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus*, which first appeared in Bengal in 1828 and was reprinted in Britain in 1846.

Monier-Williams's job was to integrate this new information about "popular Hinduism," and he did so, predictably, by putting it at the end of his book. In a way, this was natural, for the other major 19th-century advance in the study of Indian religion clearly belonged at the beginning: a knowledge of the Vedas, the earliest hymns and incantations known to Hindus. Orientalist scholars tended to conceive of the Vedas as being comprised of distinct books that needed to be found and translated. The great force in the field was Friedrich Max Müller, an Oxford professor who produced a six-volume edition of the most important Veda, the Rig Veda, from 1849 to 1873 under a commission from the East India Company and later inaugurated the series "Sacred Books of the East."

For centuries Brahmans had been telling Europeans about the Vedas, depicting them as the collection they venerated most highly but quoting them primarily through the Upanishads or other later texts. The Vedas were distant and immense, and because Vedic hymns were remembered primarily through rigorous oral traditions, they did not readily suggest themselves as candidates for translation. Yet the European predilection to see religion as based first and foremost on texts and to accord the highest status to the oldest text in a given group led religion-minded Orientalists to search the Vedas out. Once isolated and produced as books, these necessarily formed, to European eyes, the foundation stones for an adequate conception of Hinduism—or rather, as Monier-Williams and others put it, Brahmanism.

Yet the path from the early Rig Veda to contemporary Brahmanism was not ex-

actly obvious nor free from controversy. While Horace Hayman Wilson had understood the history of Hindu religion as an upward swing—"the course of time and the presence of foreign rulers have very much ameliorated the character of much of the Hindu worship," he said—Monier-Williams and his generation tended to see it as a downward trajectory. Monier-Williams made special efforts, therefore, to avert his readers' eyes from the "puerile conceits" that could surely be found in the Vedas and Upanishads and draw their attention instead to the "striking ideas, original ideas, and lofty language" that could "redeem the absurdities of the mysticism."

In *Hinduism*, Monier-Williams was at pains to bridge the two extremes of Indian religion that had come to light in the course of the 18th century—the ancient and the modern, or, as he saw it, the elevated and the mundane. He accomplished the trick through his coordinate use of the terms Brahmanism and Hinduism, which he saw not just as ideal types but as realities, with one succeeding the other. Brahmanism evoked the higher teaching of the Vedas, especially as achieved in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. when "Men began to ask themselves earnestly such questions as—What am I? Whence have I come? Has the Creator form, or is he formless? . . ." The term Hinduism, by contrast, gave a name to "Brahmanism after it had degenerated—to wit, that complicated system of polytheistic doctrines and caste-usages which has gradually resulted out of the mixture of Brahmanism and Buddhism with the non-Aryan creeds of Dravidians and aborigines." Hinduism was what was left after Brahmanism lost its Aryan—and, be it noted, Indo-European—purity.

It was only at the end of his book that he ventured into the actual subject of "idol-worship, sacred objects, holy places and times," and he did so with a certain sense of lingering resentment. "No account of Hinduism can pretend to completeness without some notice of its modern idol-worship," he admitted. Monier-Williams saved this subject for last because in his mind it was least, and he justified his approach by characterizing idol-worship as a modern phenomenon. It was seemingly impossible for him to concede that images of many deities had played a major role in Hindu thought and worship for thousands of years. The idolatry that Marco Polo had seen all about him was still not something that deserved a place at Oxford.

* * *

A number of important Indian intellectuals agreed with Monier-Williams that idolatry deserved no place in their religion. Their efforts to reconceive and reform Hindu life are not to be understood entirely as a reaction to European views, but the European understanding of the prestige of scripture in general and of the Vedas in particular contributed to their thinking. How delicious it was in the late 19th century for Swami Dayanand, founder of the influential Arya Samaj, a major Hindu revivalist organization, to excoriate the impurities and superstitions of the Bible before Christian missionaries in the Punjab, confident that his own Vedas, once cleansed of their unessential elements, could stand pristine.

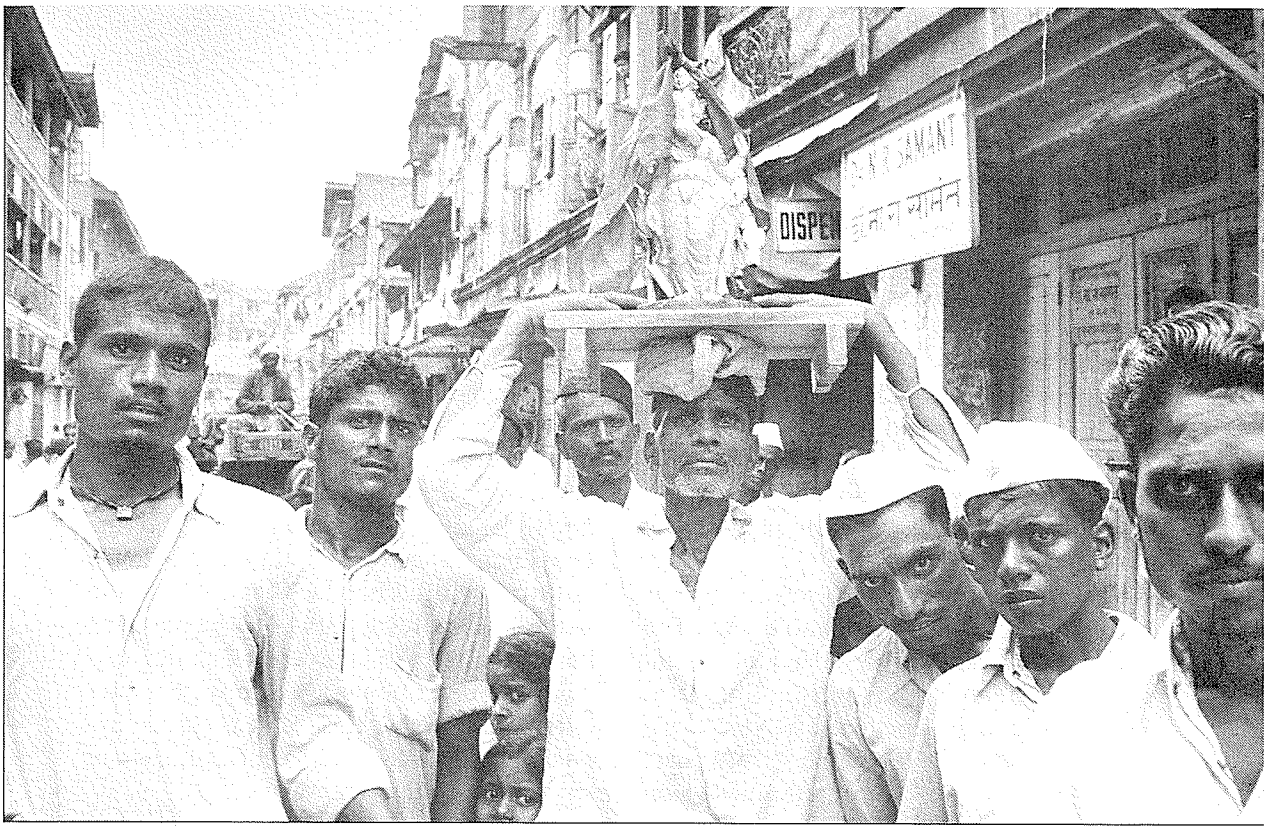
Yet there has been another approach to the creation of a pan-Indian or "syndicated" Hinduism. Once again the European intervention is significant, but this time at a bureaucratic level. Early in the 19th century, British officials in Madras began administering religious properties such as the great temples of South India. Back home, upright Britons, thinking it dreadful for a Christian nation to sully its hands with paganism, created an Anti-Idolatry Connexion

League. The government slowly had to retreat, but not before Brahman lawyers formed the Madras Hindoo Association and began to learn to manipulate the emerging law of the Raj to their own ends. They ultimately created a body of legal precedent, which treated the "Hindu religion" as a single, legal entity, and in doing so they not only named but defined a Hinduism that never before had existed—"an entirely new religion," as the historian Robert Frykenberg has said.

The Madras instance is only the first link in a considerable chain. Over the years a number of half-political, half-religious issues have led Indians to form self-consciously Hindu groups. The latest and most serious eruption began during the late 1980s in the holy city of Ayodhya in North India where Hindu militants mounted a loud campaign to "liberate" the birthplace of the god Rama from its captivity in a Muslim jail—that is, from a 16th-century mosque built on that site by the Mughal emperor Babar. Hindus from all over India and abroad as well have contributed to construct a new temple on the site. It is no accident that this Ayodhya campaign was timed to precede the critical national parliamentary elections of 1989, and many felt it was responsible that year for turning out of office Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party, which had cautiously opposed the campaign. As the Congress Home Minister, Buta Singh, quipped at the time: "It's hard to win when you're running against Rama himself."

Today's Hindu activists who press the struggle at Ayodhya are seeking to create a homogenized Hinduism in other ways, too. They borrow from the religious practices of England, the nation that first produced the word Hinduism—and, incidentally, from Islam as well: They advocate a congregational form of temple worship that is utterly different from the clangor of simultaneous individual devotions one often finds in a Hindu temple. They also want to replace the elastic rhythms of traditional Hindu piety, which filled the temples at all hours, with exact and invariant times of worship—again borrowing from Christianity and Islam. And instead of—or in addition to—the crazy quilt of Hindu pilgrimages to hundreds of holy sites scattered throughout India, they orchestrate a common, central pilgrimage point at Ayodhya, hoping thereby to establish that Hinduism is indeed a shared, single faith.

Given Hinduism's recent birth, it comes as no surprise that such efforts of self-definition are still required. Yet few doubt—and many fear—that the great rising force in Indian national identity is a Hindu force, far removed from the secularism that Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi and his grandson Rajiv propounded. Unmistakably, Hinduism is still abuilding, and the bricks assembled in Ayodhya may indeed contribute to the edifice that is yet to be.



Religion takes to the streets. Crowded public demonstrations of religious faith, like this Ganesha Festival in Bombay, are increasingly commonplace throughout India.

HINDUISM BY ANY OTHER NAME

by Wendy Doniger

> "But it isn't a Hedgehog, and it isn't a Tortoise" [said the young Painted Jaguar]. "It's a little bit of both, and I don't know its proper name."
>
> "Nonsense!" said Mother Jaguar. "Everything has its proper name. I should call it 'Armadillo' till I found out the real one. And I should leave it alone."
>
> —*Rudyard Kipling, "The Beginning of the Armadillos," in* Just So Stories *(1902).*

Kipling is one of the most dastardly of villains in the comic tragedy now playing in contemporary Indology. The White Man's Burden that he named now falls upon our shoulders, to embarrass us in the opposite way: The burden of being White Men is what hobbles us in our study of Hinduism. Or so Columbia University's Edward Said tells us, and his words are echoed by those who would deconstruct the study of "the Orient" in general and Hinduism in particular. Since Said's shattering denunciation in *Orientalism* (1978), Orientalists—Westerners who

study Eastern religions and societies—have perceived themselves to be hopelessly tarred by the brushes of racism, colonialism, Eurocentrism, and sexism. They have become so self-aware and self-critical that they have begun to self-destruct: They argue that it is not possible for non-Indians to study India, and, on the other hand, that we ourselves have created the India that we purport to study. Like Mother Jaguar, they warn us to "leave it alone."

There is, unfortunately, much to their argument, but it is not the whole story. The name "Hinduism" was indeed of recent and European construction, but it is Eurocentric to assume that when we made the name we made the game. "Hinduism" (dare I use the "H" word, and may I stop holding up my hands for mercy with quotation marks?) is, like the armadillo, part hedgehog, part tortoise. Yet there *are* armadillos, and they were there before they had names. I would like to suggest some ways in which the disparate parts of what *we* call Hinduism have in fact existed for centuries, cheek by jowl, in a kind of fluid suspension.

It is not a simple matter of listing things that "all Hindus" believe or, even, that "all Hindus" do. We need something rather more like a Venn diagram, a set of intersecting circles of concepts and beliefs, some of which are held by some Hindus, others by other Hindus, and still others shared not only by Hindus but also by believers in other South Asian religions, such as Buddhism or Jainism. We would need a similar Venn diagram to do justice to Christianity or Judaism; religions are messy. It has proved convenient for us to call this corpus of concepts Hinduism; naming is always a matter of the convenience of the namers, and *all* categories are constructed.

Walt Kelley's Pogo used to use "Samskrimps" to describe anything hopelessly arcane and intellectual. Some Westerners even mispronounce it "Sanscript," implying that it is a language without (*sans*) a (comprehensible) script. But we now understand ways in which all of the linguistic traditions in India—Sanskrit and vernacular, liturgical and secular, as well as the Aryan languages of north India and the Dravidian languages of the south—have culturally influenced one another. The noted Indian folklorist A. K. Ramanujan has given us the concept of "intertextuality" to describe the ways in which these different linguistic groups refer to or implicitly assume knowledge of a corpus of shared oral and written texts.

And these people did have ways of referring to themselves long before they called themselves "Hindus." The term "Hindu" was coined in opposition to other religions, but this self-definition through otherness began long before there was contact with Europeans (or, indeed, with Muslims). All of us identify who we are in contrast with who we are not, and the "who we are not" changes all the time. In the earliest preserved text of what is now called Hinduism, the Rig Veda—a collection of over a thousand liturgical hymns composed in about 1,000 B.C.—"we" in ancient India defined ourselves in contrast with the "aliens" or "slaves," who spoke non-Indo-European languages, had dark skin and flat noses, and had been in possession of the Indian subcontinent before the Indo-Europeans entered it.

Hindu identity—today as in earlier periods—is complicated by the intricate, fluid interplay of caste and class. Caste (*jati*), of which there are many thousands, is the ac-

Wendy Doniger *is the Mircea Eliade Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Chicago. Under the name of Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, she has published many books about Hinduism and mythology, most recently* Others Peoples' Myths: The Caves of Echoes *(1988) and, as Wendy Doniger, a new translation of* The Laws of Manu *(Penguin Books, 1991).*

tual social group into which one is born and with whose other members one eats, works, and marries. Class (*varna*) is more a theoretical construct within which each caste situates itself. A whole caste may occasionally change its class, though traditionally an individual cannot. A caste of leatherworkers, for example, because it works with dead skins is quite low on the social rung. Yet if the caste prospered, it could adapt Brahman ritual and diet, change its trade, begin to associate with Brahmans, and perhaps even become a Brahman class. (A complication: "Class" often translates into English as "caste.")

More complexity: Kali, another consort of Shiva, is the black goddess of death. But in her benevolent form, she destroys ignorance and maintains world order. Here, she attacks an army of demons.

In the Rig Veda, Indo-European society was already divided into four classes: the priests (Brahmans) who ruled the roost of the first class, the warrior-kings of the second class, the merchants and landowners who made up the third class, and a fourth class of servants, the defining "others" who were disenfranchised, not Aryan, but still marginally Hindu. Later, other groups below even the servants formed the ranks of the "not-us" who were only questionably Hindu or not Hindu at all. The largest "not-us" group was the Untouchables, whose deep-rooted pariah status was reinforced by their performing jobs, such as sweeping cremation grounds, that Hindus did not do. Others in the "not-us" category included Buddhists, Jains, various sorts of heretics, and most foreigners.

But there were also ways in which this group attempted to define who they *were*, as well as who they were *not*. Our word "Hindu" originates in the geographical feature of the Indus River, and many scholars still define Hinduism as the religion of India. The Hindus, too, sometimes defined themselves by geography. Not everyone in that geographical area is Hindu. (Today, in fact, an estimated 600 million of India's 843 million are Hindu, which still leaves enough Muslims—110 million—to make India, after Indonesia, the most populous Muslim nation in the world.) Nor, for that matter, do all Hindus live there. (Hindus spread first throughout Southeast Asia and later through the British Empire, and they can now be found scattered from Trinidad to Africa to Fiji.) But by and large this geographical definition of Hinduism is a place to begin; more significantly, it is where Hindus begin. Thus *The Laws of Manu*, the most important textbook of Hindu religious law, composed around A.D. 200, states: "From the eastern sea to the western sea, the area in between the two mountains is what wise men call the Land of the Aryans. Where the black antelope ranges by nature, that should be known as the country fit for sacrifices; and beyond it is the country of the barbarians. The twice-born should make every effort to settle in these coun-

CITY OF SHIVA

In Banaras, City of Light *(1982), Harvard professor of religion Diana Eck discerned the essence of Hinduism in one of India's holiest cities.*

There are few cities in India as traditionally Hindu and as symbolic of the whole of Hindu culture as the city of Banaras, which Hindus call Kashi—the Luminous, the City of Light. And there are few cities in India, or in the world for that matter, as challenging and bewildering to Western visitors. It is a city as rich as all India. But it is not an easy city to comprehend for those of us who stand outside the Hindu tradition . . . .

The India we see here reflects the elaborate and ancient ritual tradition of Hinduism. It is a tradition of the pilgrimage to sacred places, bathing in sacred waters, and honoring divine images. It is a tradition in which all of the senses are employed in the apprehension of the divine. Its shrines are heaped with fresh flowers and filled with the smell of incense, the chanting of prayers, and the ringing of bells. It is a tradition that has imagined and imaged God in a thousand ways, that has been adept in discovering the presence of the divine everywhere and in bringing every aspect of human life into the religious arena. It is a religious tradition that understands life and death as an integrated whole. Here the smoke of the cremation pyres rises heavenward with the spires of a hundred temples and the ashes of the dead swirl through the waters of the Ganges, the river of life.

At the outset, we cannot even *see* the scope and dimensions of this religious tradition. We do not know the myths, the symbols, and the images that are the language of access to Hinduism. In an important sense, we do not see the same city Hindus see. We see the waters of the River Ganges, we see stone images adorned with flowers, and we see cows browsing with leisurely sovereignty through the streets. So do the Hindus. We see a city of narrow lanes surging with life, streets noisy with the jangling of rickshaw bells, buildings crumbling about the edges and sagging in the balconies. So do the Hindus. But it is as if we see these things in one dimension, while Hindus see them in many dimensions. What Hindus "see" in Kashi only begins with the city that meets the eye. To know what else they see we must know what Kashi means and has meant in the Hindu tradition. What is its symbolic significance? What stories do Hindus tell of it? What mighty events do they ascribe to this place? . . . What vision do they see of the City of Light? . . .

A multitude of Hindu deities is visible everywhere in Banaras. Over the doorways of temples and houses sits the plump, orange, elephant-headed Ganesha. On the walls of tea stalls and tailor shops hang gaudy polychrome icons of Lakshmi or Krishna. And on the whitewashed walls of houses and public buildings the episodes of Shiva's marriage to Parvati, or Rama's battle with the 10-headed Ravana, are painted afresh after the season of rains by local artists.

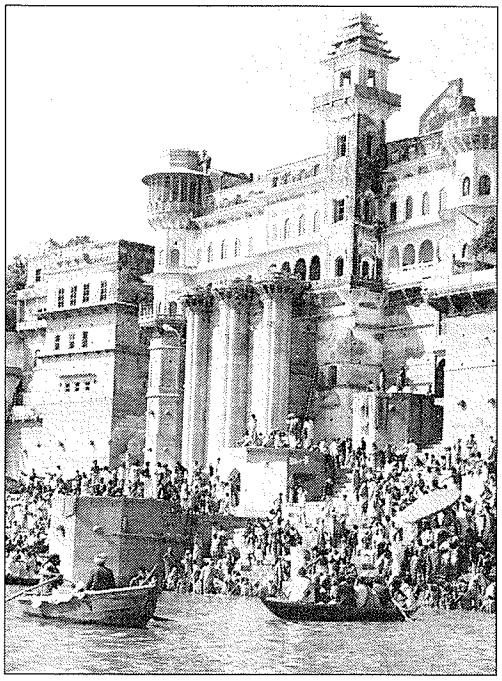
In temples one sees the *linga* [phallus] of Shiva, or the four-armed image of Vishnu, or the silver mask of the goddess Durga. Such images are crafted according to carefully prescribed rules of iconography and iconometry. When they are finished, the "breath" or "life" of the deity is invited to be present in the image . . . . The last act of the elaborate consecration rites is opening the eyes of the image, which is done symbolically with a golden needle or by placing large enameled eyes upon the image. Contact between God and the worshiper is exchanged most powerfully, they say, through the eyes.

The Hindu tradition has entrusted the senses, especially the eyes, with the apprehension of the holy. When Hindus go to the temple, they do not say, "I am going to worship," but rather, "I am going for *darshana.*" The word *darshana* means "seeing." In the religious sense, it means beholding the divine image and standing in the presence of God. Hindus go for *darshana* especially at those times of the day when the image is beautifully adorned with flowers, and when offerings of incense, water, food, and camphor lamps are presented to the deity. The central acts of Hindu worship are having the *darshana* of the Lord and receiving the *prasada,* the consecrated food offerings, which are the Lord's special "grace" or " blessing." For Hindus, therefore, the image is not an object at which one's vision halts, but rather a lens through which one's vision is directed . . . .

Of course, it is not only the divine image, but the fact that there are so many different images that invites our understanding. It is fundamental to the Hindu tradition and to the Hindu way of thinking that the Divine, the Supreme Lord, can be seen in a great variety of ways and

from many different perspectives. From one perspective it is perceived that there are more gods, or faces of God, than we can count—350 million, they say. And yet, from another perspective, it is obvious that there is One. The fact that there may be many gods does not diminish their power or significance. Each one of the great gods may serve as a lens through which the whole may be clearly seen.

When Hindus travel on a pilgrimage to a holy place such as Banaras, it is also for *darshana*—not sight-seeing but "sacred sight-seeing." They want to have the *darshana* of the place itself as well as that of its presiding deity, who in Kashi is Shiva Vashvanatha, the "Lord of All." Their vision is sharpened and refined by the rigors of the pilgrim journey. Some travel long distances by train or bus. Some come on foot, as the many generations before them have done, walking the dusty roads of rural India, balancing a bundle of provisions on their heads....

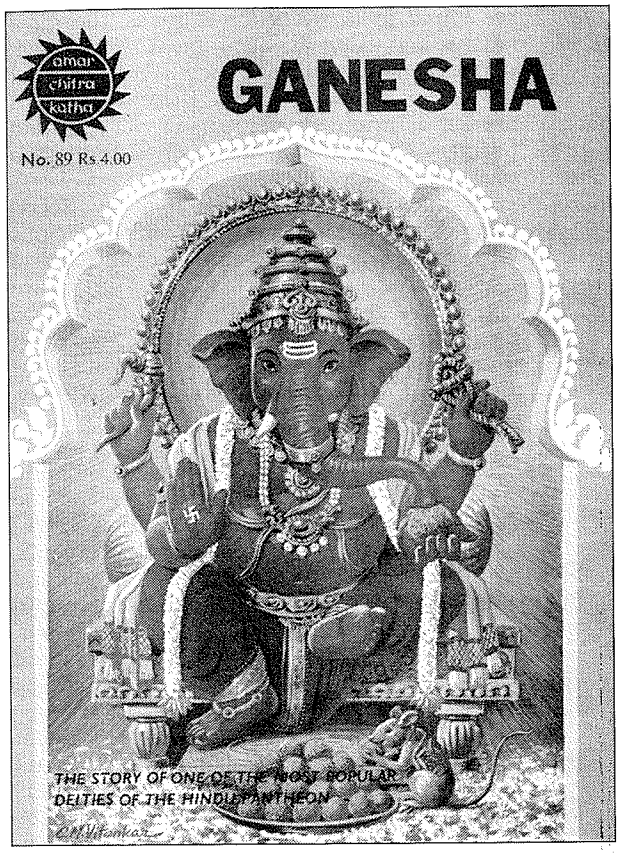


As pilgrims arrive in Kashi and travel by bicycle rickshaw from the train station to their rest house, the city that meets the eye is not so different from the city described by its Western visitors—the narrow streets, the cows, the temples, the *ghats* [stone steps leading from the river up to the city], the river. Hindus, however, see also the city that engages the religious imagination. For hundreds of generations, Kashi has received pilgrims like themselves, who have seen this city through the eyes of the collective imagination and the power of religious vision.

From childhood, these pilgrims have known of Kashi, not through the diaries of travelers, but through a type of traditional literature called *mahatmya*. A *mahatmya* is a laud, a hymn of praise, a glorification. These praises, of particular places or of particular gods, form a part of the many Puranas, the "ancient stories" of the gods, kings, and saints. Kashi *mahatmyas* are found in many of the Puranas, the most famous and extensive being the *Kashi Khanda* of the *Skanda Purana* and the *Kashi Rahasya* of the *Brahmavaivarta Purana*. These *mahatmyas* are not descriptive statements of fact about an ordinary city, but statements of faith about a sacred city.

Kashi is the whole world, they say. Everything on earth that is powerful and auspicious is here, in this microcosm. All of the sacred places of India and all of her sacred waters are here. All of the gods reside here, attracted by the brilliance of the City of Light.... And all of time is here, they say, for the lords of the heavenly bodies which govern time are grounded in Kashi and have received their jurisdiction over the days and the months right here. Thus, all of the organizing forces of space and time begin here, and are present here, within the sacred boundaries of the City of Light....

As pilgrims stand at the top of the *ghats* and see the famed riverfront of Kashi and the great sweep of the Ganges for the first time, what do they know of the *mahatmyas* that glorify this city? There are thousands of hymns and stories of Kashi's pilgrims and temples in the *mahatmya* literature and in the oral traditions of different regions and even different families. Pilgrims may know very little, and perhaps no two pilgrims know quite the same stories. During the two or three days they spend here, they will learn a little more, from the *pandas* [people who act as hosts for the pilgrims], storytellers, and charlatans, or from the penny-paperback *mahatmyas* for sale in the bazaars. But even as they arrive, they bring with them the wealth of tradition which has drawn their ancestors here for as long as the mind can imagine, since "the days before the Ganges came from heaven to earth," they might say. And the city they see, they see in the light of a long tradition of faith.



Popular Hinduism: Religious comic books are big sellers. Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, is the son of Shiva and Parvati. He is the patron god of authors, thieves, and newlyweds. He receives the first invitation to a wedding.

tries; but a servant may live in any country at all if he is starving to death."

Sometimes the Hindus defined themselves not by geography but by texts: "We are the people whose canon is the Veda." This textual definition was often given a social corollary: "We are the people who revere the Brahmans, the custodians of the Veda." And this social corollary, in turn, was also expanded: "We are the people who follow the way of life (*dharma*) of the four social classes and the four stages of life: student, householder, forest-dweller, and renouncer." This definition in terms of social praxis prevailed for such a long time that Europeans often argued that Hinduism was not a religion but a social system (just as they argued that Buddhism was not a religion but a philosophy).

In general, Hindus have defined themselves not by beliefs but by practices. The Hinduism of the Vedas, a Hinduism which has essentially survived to the present day, was and is pluralistic. It advocates the worship (often through animal sacrifice) of a pantheon of many gods, most of whom by A.D. 200 had been assimilated to Shiva, Vishnu in his many incarnations (including both Krishna and Rama), or the Goddess in her many forms (which range from the bloodthirsty Kali to Parvati, the mild-mannered wife of Shiva). Pluralistic Hinduism is further characterized by its *dharmas* that differ not only for every caste but for different individuals in different stages of life and for different social groups.

Identifying Hinduism by naming its various gods can be tricky. Indeed, in India even pantheism had, from the start, a monistic tinge. In the Veda, one hymn will praise one god as the supreme god (though not the only god), but another hymn will use exactly the same words to praise another god. F. Max Müller, the renowned 19th-century Oxford Sanskrit professor, aptly named this phenomenon "henotheism," the worship of one (supreme) god at a time. Bearing in mind the way in which the metaphor of adultery has traditionally been used by monotheistic religions to stigmatize polytheism (and used by Hinduism itself to characterize the love of god), we might regard this attitude as a kind of theological serial monogamy: "I love you, Indra, and have never loved any other god." "I love you, Vishnu, and have never loved any

other god." Serial monogamy remains characteristic of devotional Hinduism: The worshipers who regard Vishnu as the supreme god not only acknowledge other gods such as the elephant-headed Ganesha (or, for that matter, Jesus) but offer them worship on special occasions, just as they will occasionally use penicillin to supplement, rather than replace, one of the native homeopathic systems.

Another unifying principle is *karma*, to which the gods as well as the bodies below them are subject. *Karma* is the law of rebirth as a result of the cumulative merit and demerit of one's actions. Almost all Hindus assume that *karma*, retributive rebirth, is what happens to people. But some think that good *karma* is good and try to amass it, while others think that all *karma* is bad and flee from it; some accept the effects of *karma* as inevitable, while others regard the power of *karma* as a challenge that human effort may overcome.

The Vedas spoke of the fear of death and the fear of rebirth. These fears led to the desire for freedom from the wheel of rebirth and *karma*, which was to be achieved by the renunciation of all worldly goals. But in later centuries, the ideal of freedom was reabsorbed into mainstream Hinduism and inverted into the desire to be reborn, but reborn better in worldly terms: richer, fatter, with more sons, and so forth. (Worldly Hindus believe, wisely, that you can't be too rich or too fat.) Freedom or renunciation of earthly ambition and desires, while still extolled in theory, often was now indefinitely postponed. Many Hindus offered a version of Saint Augustine's prayer, "Make me chaste, O Lord, but not yet." More generally, the two groups—worldly and transcendent, pure and impure—are both considered necessary to compose society as a whole. Thus the holiness and knowledge of the renouncer are fed back into the society that supports him.

This complex system of interlocking, sometimes contradictory ideas and ideals—caste, *karma*, renunciation, and the worship of various gods—has formed the religious scuttlebutt, the common wisdom, of all Hindus for many centuries. Different Hindus may accept or deny different elements of this scuttlebut, and while all Hindus pay lip service to certain ideals, relatively few truly embody them. But all Hindus have been part of the same conversation: All Hindus *know about* these things, as we know about Adam and Eve. Their kids pick them up in what we euphemistically refer to as "the street," just as our kids pick up their ideas about Darth Vader and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. As A. K. Ramanujan has often remarked of the great epic, the Mahabharata (recently presented to the West in a play and a film by Peter Brook), "No Indian ever hears the Mahabharata for the first time." Hindus are programmed with unconscious, unexamined assumptions, whether or not they believe them or like them.

So the fact that the people whom we call Hindus have defined themselves in many different ways—and that these definitions do not always delineate the same sets of people—does not invalidate the category of Hinduism. For this is how categories always work. Scientists nowadays make a similar sort of assumption when they define light as both a wave and a particle. Categories have to be recycled, like newspapers or tin cans; they are ladders that we climb up and then kick out from under us. The Venn diagram of Hinduism is constantly in motion, because it is made of people, also constantly in motion. But it is *there*, no matter what we, or they, choose to call it.

THE NEW POLITICS OF HINDUISM

by Prasenjit Duara

It was an amazing spectacle, and one could have witnessed it almost anywhere in India. In 1989, from every corner of the country Hindus set off on pilgrimages—which in itself would not have been so unusual, except that every person clutched in one hand a single brick. If all those bricks were laid side by side and on top of each other, they would have made an incredible edifice, which was exactly the intention. The thousands of Hindus were on their way to Ayodhya in northern India where they hoped to build a temple, a shrine, to the legendary sage-king Rama at the site of his birthplace. There was but one problem: The site was already occupied—by a 16th-century Islamic mosque.

That a mosque stands on Rama's birthplace has come to symbolize the division between Hindus and Muslims in India. Secular-minded intellectuals have derided the Ayodhya campaign as "brick worship." But Ashok Singhal's nationalistic Hindu organization, the VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad or Universal Hindu Council)—which first startled the country in 1983 when it mobilized Hindus to crisscross the land distributing sacred water from the Ganges—has succeeded in making "Ayodhya" a major issue in Indian politics.

What strikes the historian about the Ayodhya affair is how hard it would be to imagine such a mobilization of Hindus even a mere hundred years ago. For centuries, Muslims and Hindu pilgrims worshipped quietly at the site (the temple to Rama was rebuilt nearby). What we call Hindu or Hinduism today was not a particularly meaningful category in those days. At first, the VHP, founded in 1964, had little success in bringing together the different sects and religious groups that are involved in the Ayodhya affair today. Few would have predicted that followers of Vishnu, disciples of Shiva, Tantric occultists, and other groups in the "Hindu melange," with their long history of mutual hostility, could come together with such apparent peace under the banner of Hinduism at Ayodhya.

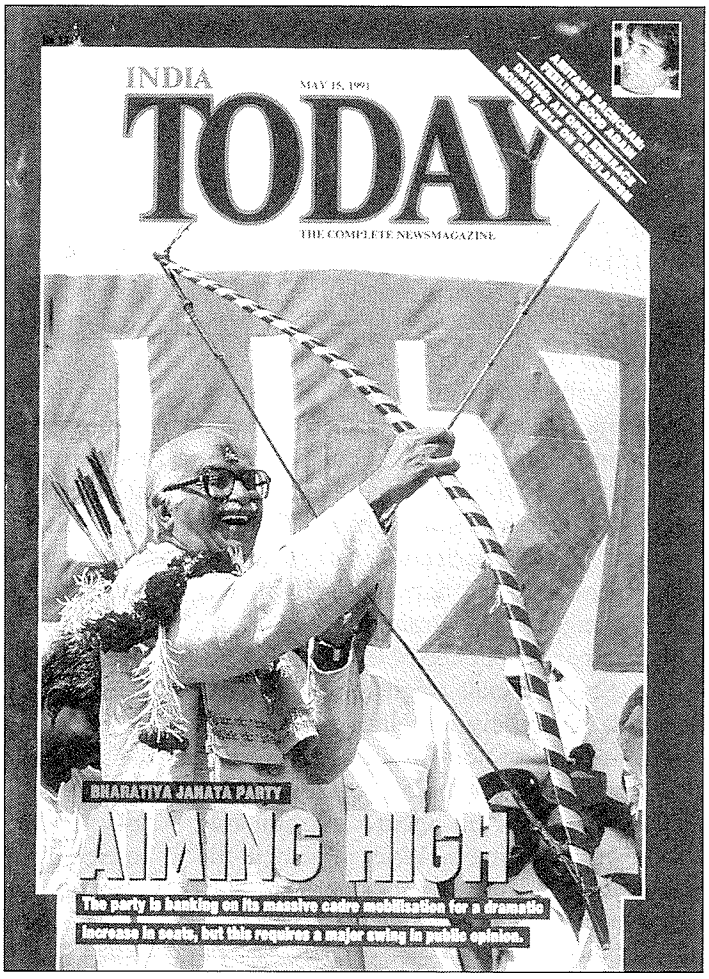
The developments at Ayodhya represent the latest chapter in the century-long emergence of a national or "syndicated" Hinduism. From the outset syndicated Hinduism was a phenomenon more political than religious. Indeed the type of experiences we call "religious"—either routine forms of worship or transcendent spiritual experiences—cannot be easily found in syndicated Hinduism. What brings together the Hindus at Ayodhya is less common religious beliefs and ideas than their shared hostility to Muslims. Syndicated Hinduism also has other, explicitly political goals—such as reversing affirmative-action legislation for Islamic and other minorities in India—by which the VHP and other groups hope to construct a constituency for a pan-Indian Hinduism.

Meaningful religious life in India exists at the level of the sects or divisions of Hinduism. Even the expression "sects of Hinduism" is misleading because Hinduism is not a religion the way other world religions such as Christianity or Islam are. While those religions also have sects, they all have a central reference point, be it the historical founder and his teachings or a single

sacred text. Although latter-day Hindus have attempted to transform the Bhagavad Gita (or some other text) into the religious canon, it is exceedingly difficult to find a text or, for that matter, a practice or even an idea that would be acceptable to all the groups called Hindu. Even such a seemingly ingrained Hindu idea as reincarnation was absent from the ancient Vedas and has been rejected by numerous groups, such as the Charvakas in the sixth century B.C., the medieval Kapalikas, and 19th-century Hindu reformers like Ram Mohun Roy.

Although its origins may be traced to European Orientalists, the new monolithic Hinduism was welcomed by Indian nationalist intellectuals in the late 19th century. The reasons have much to do with the era's emerging systems of nations and nation-states. In the late 19th century, nationalistic Indian intellectuals faced the challenge of unifying their country. The British rulers maintained that India was a mosaic of castes and communities with no national consciousness, held together only by colonial rule. Indian leaders responded to this charge in contradictory ways. Some held that the historical unity of India lay in a common secular culture. Others, however, found it in the shared religious traditions of Hinduism. Although the Indian national movement wrested independence from the British in 1947, neither of these approaches has fully succeeded in integrating Hindus and non-Hindus into the new Indian nation. John Kenneth Galbraith, former U.S. ambassador to New Delhi, recently observed that ever since independence, India has remained in a state of "suspenseful indecision."

The Indian national movement was Janus-faced with regard to the question of Hinduism. One face of it, the more public and constitutional representatives such as Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), the nation's first prime minister, and the Nobel Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–



In India's 1991 election, the Congress Party pledged stability and the Janata Dal promised caste reform. But L. K. Advani's Hindu-based BJP claimed to speak for "the nation" as a whole.

1941) were committed to secularism. Nehru saw India as a secular nation composed of different communities and religions, each of which had made distinctive historical contributions. Hinduism for him was merely one of the sources of India's greatness, along with Buddhism, the Muslim emperors, and even traditional science. In explaining how the subcontinental polity had become "Indianized," Nehru gave pride of place to the Moghul emperor, Akbar (1542–1605): "Akbar's success is astonishing," Nehru wrote, "for he created a sense of oneness among the diverse elements of north and central India .... It was not merely an attachment to his person; it was an attachment to the structure he had built." For Nehru, the glorious history of India was the most authentic testimony to the country's capacity to maintain a "unity among diversity." This secularist conception is enshrined in India's constitution and was upheld by Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi and by her son Rajiv.

But the state in India is also subtly implicated with Hinduism. Indeed, the activities of the modern Indian state reveal that the foreign conception of "secularism" has not really taken root in India. Even picking an official language is a problem. The government seeks to derive a common vocabulary from classical Sanskrit—but that is the language of the Brahmanic texts, the language par excellence of Brahmanic Hinduism. State officials might like to think a Sanskrit vocabulary is religiously neutral, but in the eyes of non-Hindus or even non-Brahmans, that vocabulary makes the Indian state appear an agent of Brahmanic Hinduism. Imagine a West in which the wall between church and state was suddenly breached. The use of Latin words in the English language might likewise be interpreted as Catholic domination.

Recently, All-India Radio sent out a directive to its employees, and particularly the newsreaders-translators in the respective languages, including Hindi, Urdu, and Kashmiri, ordering that *rashtrapati* be used for president, *up-rashtrapati* for vice president, and so on. Those words are Sanskrit, and to groups such as the Muslims of Kashmir, who have begun a campaign for secession from India, the directive sounds suspiciously as though Hindu chauvinists are denying them the right to imagine the nation in their own language. In India's highly charged religious and cultural atmosphere, minorities hardly perceive the state's insistence on using Sanskrit as "secular"; they become even more determined to liberate themselves.

This interplay of Hinduism and national politics has a history, but in many ways it is a peculiarly recent history. In the first half of the 20th century two types of groups were chiefly responsible for the creation of a national Hinduism. First, there were the nationalist intellectuals and leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, who emphasized its most universal and abstract features, seeking to develop a tolerant attitude toward the many other religious groups within India. Quite opposed to them were those who tried to define a Hindu fundamentalism which would clearly demarcate believers from nonbelievers. Syndicated Hinduism as it exists today is the product of these two contradictory tendencies. Today, sadly, most of the universalism and tolerance promoted by Gandhi and others is gone.

The Hinduism of nationalists such as

Prasenjit Duara, *currently a Wilson Center Fellow, is associate professor of history at the University of Chicago. His* Culture, Power, and State: Rural North China, 1900–1942 *(1988) won both the Joseph Levenson Prize of the Association of Asian Studies and the John K. Fairbanks Prize in East Asian History.*

Gandhi was drawn essentially from the Brahmanic tradition and capped off by the universalism of the Advaita Vedanta, a radically monastic faith whose central tenet is the unity of all being. The great early designers of national Hinduism who espoused the Vedantic faith were Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) and Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950). It was Vivekananda who presented this Hinduism to the West at the Congress of Religions in Chicago in 1893. But it was Sri Aurobindo who fashioned Hinduism as the cultural ideology of Indian nationalism. Cambridge-educated, Aurobindo was a charismatic man who reacted violently against his highly Anglicized upbringing, turning initially to revolutionary nationalism and finally ending his days as a Vedantic mystic in the Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry. For Aurobindo, Indian society differed essentially from that of the West: Western society was permeated through and through with base materialist principles, while Indian caste society was founded on the equitable distribution of spiritual and moral duties. As a revolutionary, Aurobindo did not accept caste as it existed—his was a reformist or even radical agenda—and he regarded socialism as part of the Hindu/Indian order. But, nonetheless, all of his seemingly modern ideas Aurobindo saw as simply fulfilling the divine as conceived by the Brahmanical tradition.

The religious ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, the most important Indian nationalist leader, were uniquely his own. But he was drawn to this tolerant, reforming Hinduism as the cultural and spiritual foundation of Indian nationhood. Thus while Gandhi condemned the "sin" of caste and the "deadlier sin" of Untouchability, he believed in the utopian Hindu ideal of *Rama Rajya* (kingdom of Rama) as the blueprint of India's new social order. This was to be a patriarchy ruled by an exemplary moral leader, an economic utopia in which reciprocal production ruled out competition and differences in status. Like Aurobindo, Gandhi found his inspiration for a perfect society in a Hindu ideal, but he was able to use it to rally a vast popular following that he yoked to the freedom struggle.

However inclusive these men wished their Hinduism to be, and however necessary it may have been for political mobilization, a national Hinduism so closely associated with Brahmanism was bound to cause problems for both Hinduism and the national movement. And most of the leaders of the national movement were either Brahmans or upper-caste Hindus. Gandhi's reformist Hinduism and Aurobindo's mysticism were hardly as virulently exclusive as syndicated Hinduism is today. Yet the creation of Pakistan in 1947 can be traced to the anxieties of a Muslim elite which feared that an independent India would be increasingly Hinduized. National Hinduism also forced those on the borders of the Hindu melange to choose whether they were Hindu or not, and, in certain cases, like that of the Sikhs (who now threaten to secede from the nation) even whether they were Indian or not.

The other major group behind national Hinduism were "fundamentalists" who interpreted strictly what it meant to be a Hindu. These activities lay outside the nationalist movement led by the Congress Party, but these fundamentalists too sought to define Hinduism as the basis of a national culture. This strain developed originally in reaction to Christian missionary activities, but eventually reproduced many of the features of Christianity itself. The militant Arya Samaj was founded in the late 19th century by Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883), an ascetic who preached throughout northern India. The Arya Samaj actually emerged

PLAYING THE HINDU CARD AT THE POLLS

Independent India's 10th national election, interrupted for three weeks by Rajiv Gandhi's assassination on May 21, took place against the backdrop of caste and religious unrest, rising inflation, incipient government bankruptcy, and regional revolts. But what may be most notable about this election is what did *not* happen.

For the second time in a row, the Congress Party—which has ruled India for all but four of its 44 years of independence—failed to win a majority in the 543-seat Parliament. Although Congress's P. V. Narasimha Rao has formed a new coalition government, it is doubtful that the 70-year-old Gandhi loyalist can lead it anywhere. Already, attention in India has shifted to the next election, not constitutionally required before 1996, but likely to be held much sooner. It is an election that the Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stands a very good chance of winning.

The BJP was this year's real winner, replacing former prime minister V. P. Singh's Janata Dal as India's major opposition party. Formed in 1988 by an amalgamation of five anti-Congress parties, the Janata Dal appealed for social justice for India's "other backward castes," the so-called OBCs, which make up about 45 percent of the Hindu population (and do not include the Untouchables). As prime minister in 1990, Singh tried to impose hiring quotas that would have reserved 22 percent of the country's future job openings for OBCs. In the ensuing protests, nearly 100 upper-caste youths burned themselves to death in the streets. This year, the Janata Dal lost almost two-thirds of its places in parliament, retaining barely more than 50 seats.

The BJP, meanwhile, won 120 seats. In 1984, only two elections ago, it was a regional party supported by some Brahmans and Vaisha-Banyas (merchants and traders) in north-central India; it won only two seats.

The party's success is a testament to the strategy of its avuncular president, Lal Krishna Advani. The BJP maintains a united front, by marked contrast to the strife-ridden Congress and Janata Dal, while also seeming to distance itself from other, more fundamentalist Hindu groups. Its platform is strongly nationalist and pro-business; it includes a call to equip India's armed forces with nuclear weapons. BJP campaigners evoke an India of restored greatness, an India unfettered by the "bogus secularism" espoused by Congress, which, in the BJP's view, invidiously favors minorities, especially Muslims. The BJP's promise of "equal treatment" for all Indian citizens has broad appeal; Rajiv Gandhi's acceptance of a separate civil code for Muslims in 1986 still sits badly with most Hindus.

There are several reasons to believe that the BJP may win next time. The declining professionalism of the military and the low morale of elite civil servants favor a cohesive party confident of its message. The party's clean image and serene public face go down well in a country where people are prone to equate governance with malfeasance. Its promise of an unshackled domestic economy is likely to gain favor as New Delhi's deficits and appallingly inefficient socialized business enterprises continue to drag down the economy. And of course there is always the "Hindu card" to play—for example, by fanning communal tensions through the Ayodhya temple dispute.

But the results of a BJP victory are not likely to be as apocalyptic as some detractors predict. Despite their implicitly anti-Muslim rhetoric, Advani and his colleagues are pragmatic men. Indeed, BJP *state* governments have maintained public peace far more effectively than their Congress predecessors did. India's foreign relations may also benefit. No crash program to build nuclear weapons is likely. And just as it took the anticommunist Richard Nixon to establish a Sino-American link, so may the BJP be able to smooth India's troubles with its Muslim neighbors. With its impeccable Hindu credentials, the BJP may be able to make concessions that other parties cannot consider. The same advantage could help the BJP resolve the secessionist crisis in the predominantly Muslim state of Kashmir.

A BJP victory is certainly not guaranteed. Yet the party's appeal will continue to grow if India's multiple problems do. And that is only too likely to happen.

—James Clad

***James Clad** is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment.*

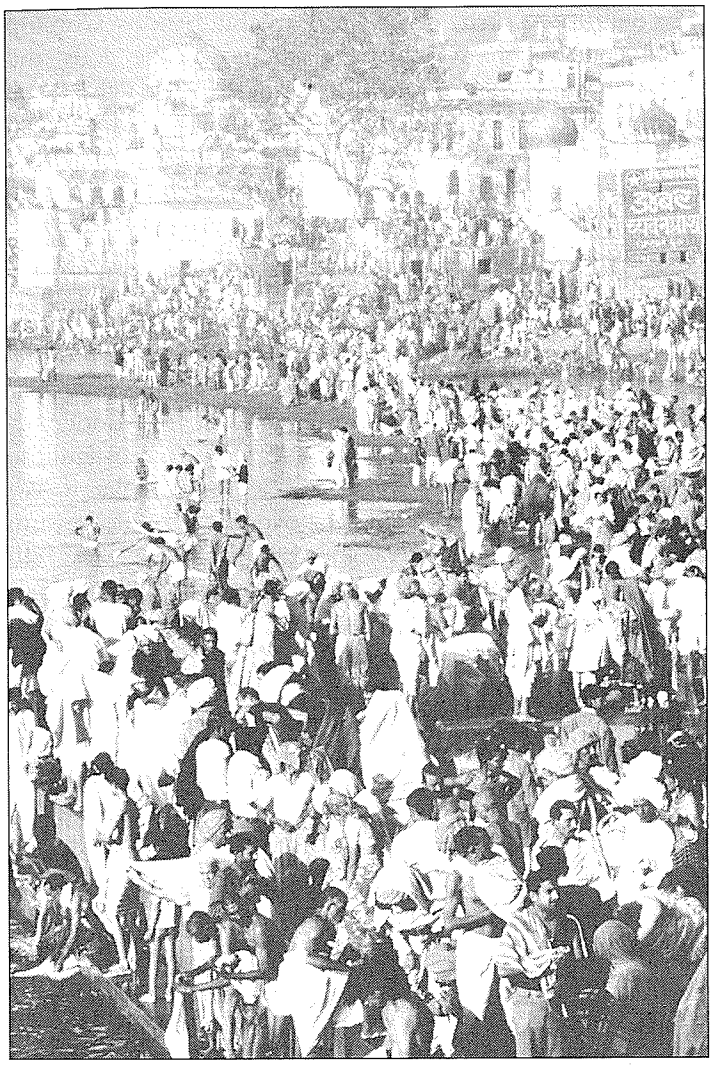
from its leaders' debates with missionaries in the bazaar pulpits of the Punjab. Its educational agenda and combative missionary spirit were evangelical in method, even though its message was strongly anti-Western. Thus it set up schools and introduced the novelty of the reconversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism. Dayanand believed that Hinduism, like Christianity and Islam, possessed central authoritative scriptures: the ancient Vedas. He believed in the pure theism expressed in the Vedas and rejected the so-called accretions of medieval Hinduism, such as child marriage and the proliferation of castes. In this way the Arya Samaj came, ironically, to define a new Hindu fundamentalism which was, in fact, completely alien to the history of the various groups in the Hindu melange.

Today's Sikh secessionist movement in the Punjab cannot be understood without reference to the Hindu fundamentalism of the Arya Samaj. Sikhs rallied to the movement in 1984, after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered Indian troops to assault a band of Sikh militants holed up in the Sikh's holiest shrine in Amritsar. Gandhi was later assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards, and 1,000 Sikhs were killed during Hindu riots that followed. Sectarian violence—kept alive by Sikh separatist guerrillas—has raged ever since. Last year, it cost more than 3,000 Indians their lives.

Yet until a century ago, Sikhism in the Punjab would have been considered just another religion within the Hindu melange. Sikhism was founded by a Hindu mystic and guru, Nanak (1469–1539), who taught a devotional approach to the divine (called *bhakti*) instead of the customary Brahman or sacrificial approach. The differences between Sikhs and Brahmans could be likened, loosely, to those between Protestants and Catholics. In numerous ways a Sikh distinguishes himself from a Brahman Hindu: The holy language of Hindus is Sanskrit, of Sikhs, Punjabi; Hindus worship many icons and statues of the gods, the Sikhs worship no images. Although Nanak had welcomed both Hindus and Muslims to his fellowship, the Muslim rulers in the Punjab certainly did not welcome Sikhs. In the long centuries of resisting persecution, the Sikhs became a militarized people, a "community of martial lions." (The most common Sikh surname, Singh, means "lion.") They set themselves apart physically by wearing the five *k*s: the long hair (*kesh*), the comb (*kanga*), the undergarment (*kachha*), the bracelet (*kara*) and the dagger (*kripan*). Politically, there was a Sikh kingdom after the overthrow of the Muslim rulers of northern India in the late 18th century. But theologically the Sikhs did not perceive themselves as radically different from other groups in the Hindu melange, and by the mid-19th century, the distinction between the Sikhs and other Hindus had begun to disintegrate. This was a time when, according to contemporary Sikh writer Khushwant Singh, Sikhs were "faced with the prospect of being reabsorbed into Hinduism and ceasing to exist as a separate community."

At first, Dayanand's reformed Hinduism appealed as much to the Sikhs as to the Hindus in the Punjab. But it did not take the Sikhs long to appreciate the uncompromising stance of the Arya Samaj's Hinduism. In their desire to rid Hinduism of its post-Vedic accretions, the Arya vilified all those who did not conform to its fundamentalist vision. Indeed, Dayanand was said to have denounced the first guru Nanak as a hypocrite. "The more the Samajists claimed Sikhism to be a branch of Hinduism," Singh writes, "the more the Sikhs insisted that they were a distinct and separate community." The polarization of Hindu versus Sikh thus originated a mere hundred years ago.

Ironically, the more vigorously that syn-



Sacred river: The life-giving Ganges is worshipped like a goddess, and its waters are used in a variety of Hindu religious ceremonies.

dicated Hinduism proclaims itself the sole inheritor of the indigenous Indian religion, the more it becomes denuded of any true Hindu religious values—such as tolerance and nonviolence. Hindu fundamentalists often turn to violent means to suppress Muslims, assertive Untouchables, and other minorities. Since independence, they have been involved in hundreds of communal riots costing thousands of lives throughout North India. It was a Hindu fundamentalist who assassinated Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 for trying to bring the Untouchables into the mainstream of Indian life.

Since syndicated Hinduism is less religion than politics, it is hardly surprising that one of its main architects, Veer Savarkar (1883–1966), was by no means a man of religious faith and at best an agnostic in private life. Indeed, for him, Hinduism as a religion was but a small part of what he called *hindutva*, or Hindu-ness, which he saw as the "racial" unity of all Hindus. In this sense, syndicated Hinduism does not differ from other dominant racial or ethnic groups that have achieved solidarity by persecuting minorities. Since the word Hinduism is in the West associated only with religion, Westerners tend to perceive "Hindu" conflicts in India as purely religious in nature but, significantly, Indian public opinion refers to them as "communal" conflicts.

Being political, syndicated Hinduism cannot find expression in everyday religious practices and even less in any theological principle. Rather, Hindu militants try to take control of the public spaces, the bazaars and streets, where people can be mobilized and the Islamic or Sikh enemy can be confronted. The process began around the turn of the century when nationalist leaders in western India, such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, invented pan-Hindu religious ceremonies like the

Ganapati Utsav—the celebration of the elephant-headed god, Ganesha. Songs written for these festivals urged Hindus to boycott the Muslim festival of Muharram, which they had once joined in celebrating. Since then, Hindu street festivities have been occurring with ever increasing frequency, their blaring loudspeakers and surging crowds announcing that Hindus command the public sphere.

What forces in Indian society sustain this syndicated Hinduism? After independence, as the democratic process brought the lower castes and other new social groups into the political fray, syndicated Hinduism provided them a sense of identity and a strategy for acquiring cultural respectability. At the same time, groups such as the upper-caste Marathas, who ruled their own state in western India during the 18th century and who now feel threatened by increasingly militant Untouchable groups, find it in their interest to nationalize their cause—to raise the flag of Hinduism in danger—to protect their own particular interests.

And with the Ayodhya temple affair, religious issues for the first time in the history of independent India threatened to overshadow secular ones in a national election. During the Ayodhya controversy, the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, or Indian People's Party)—often regarded as the parliamentary wing of Hindu organizations such as the VHP—experienced an enormous surge in popularity. The BJP, led by L. K. Advani, advocates both an aggressive foreign policy against India's Muslim neighbors and the repeal of affirmative action for religious minorities. After suffering major defeats in the past, the BJP emerged from the 1989 elections poised to be the single most powerful party in North and Central India where it already controls several state governments. Nationally the BJP was strong enough by last November to bring down the coalition government of Prime Minister V. P. Singh, who had opposed building the Ayodhya temple, by withdrawing its support.

At the same time, however, the Ayodhya controversy shows the very thin basis for religious unity among the groups involved. There is a covert, and sometimes not so covert, contest for leadership of the Hindu side between the VHP, the wandering ascetic sects known as *sadhus*, and recently, the head monks of the Vedanta order. These groups have little in common save their hostility to Islam; they try to build unity by constantly referring to *Bharat Mata*, Mother India, a concept that didn't exist before the Independence movement. *Bharat Mata* is indeed a loaded term, for not only is *bharat* a Sanskrit word, but the rallying cry of "Mother India" reveals that, ultimately, there groups are appealing to politics, not to religion.

Indeed, religion has become so mixed up with politics that several of the established parties committed to secularism, such as the long-dominant Congress Party, are now also exploiting religious issue for political gain. It was during the rule of Indira Gandhi that the Congress Party first became involved with religious politics. In the early 1970s, she promoted, for instance, an obscure Sikh fundamentalist in the Punjab, Bhindranwale, in order to undermine the more moderate Sikh political opposition to her own party. Bhindranwale, who turned out to be a powerful charismatic figure, quickly seized the opportunity and came to lead a new Sikh fundamentalist movement, and that movement eventually took Indira Gandhi's very life. More recently, after its losses in the 1989 elections in the north to the BJP, the Congress Party began to reorient its image as a secular party, to remove the impression that it was going out of its way to please minorities.

The question of minorities is crucial. Syndicated Hinduism has alienated not only those who were never Hindu, such as Muslims and Christians, but also those at the margins of the melange: the Sikhs, the non-Brahmans in the south, and the Untouchables. Since independence, hundreds of thousands of Untouchables have converted to Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Not only individuals but whole Untouchable communities find it easy to opt out of Hinduism precisely because there is now something called Hinduism.

Untouchable communities, which form over 20 percent of the population, now have something against which they can organize themselves. The most militant Untouchable group calls itself the Dalit Panther (or Oppressed Panthers—an obvious play on America's Black Panthers). Formed in the early 1970s by a group of Buddhist converts from the Untouchables—poets, writers, and public figures—the group launched a series of civil disobedience campaigns in western India. (Despite their name, they are not necessarily wedded to violence.) The Dalits' rejection of Hinduism and their conversion to Buddhism clearly show how the element in the Hindu melange, Brahmanism, has become identified with Hinduism as a whole, and therefore, why groups like the Dalits reject it.

Religious strife in modern India is scarcely the responsibility of national Hinduism alone. The British colonizers intentionally polarized the country along religious and communal lines during the first half of the 20th century. As part of their "divide and rule" policy, the British encouraged Muslims, lower castes, and other minorities to develop their communal identity by granting them separate elections for the local councils. But these minority communities have, since independence, hardened their stance against majoritarian religious domination. In response to their defiant stance, syndicated Hinduism becomes even more intransigent, and so it goes in a vicious cycle. The gains of the BJP in the 1991 election, the signs of a turn in Congress politics, and the portrayal of local conflicts as battles between Hindus and non-Hindus all show with dismaying clarity how thoroughly India's political process is now dominated by religion.

As syndicated Hinduism captures political power in India, we can expect more dire consequences for the various minorities than the early "secular nationalists" like Gandhi or Nehru could ever have imagined. Indeed, we need to reconsider the meaning of modern secularism. If the distinction between the secular and the religious is arbitrary, and if Western societies have learned to respect that distinction only after the gradual waning of religious influence, then in India, where religion is alive and growing, secularization will appear an uncomfortable import. The modern secularism of the enlightened Indian intelligentsia may have always been misplaced. Maybe Indians are recovering the language they feel most comfortable with—the language of religious ties and identity. This is certainly what we have seen throughout Indian history: Politics and society have been inseparable from religion. If this is so, India's Hindu majority will have to relearn the most important lesson of its past: how to live as Hindus with a plurality of traditions, not only with Muslims and other minorities, but also with the variety within.

HINDUISM AND THE FATE OF INDIA

Centuries ago, when Muslims classified the nonbelievers under their rule, they used "people of the Book" to distinguish Christians and Jews from Hindus. That distinction remains useful, and any consideration of Hinduism must first confront the problem of what I might call the "booking" of Hinduism, the slow solidification of a fluid religious tradition into ink and paper, print on page. This transformation from oral tradition to book can be traced to the 19th-century search in Europe for a single Hindu holy book analogous to the Bible.

The early search for "the essence" of Hinduism began when the East India Trading Company commissioned the Sanskritist, F. Max Müller, to edit and publish the Rig Veda, which officials assumed was the Indian equivalent of the Bible. Although he never set foot in Mother India, Müller's early essays on Hinduism (recently reprinted as **Chips from a German Workshop,** [Scholars Press, 1985]) were enormously influential: Müller hypothesized that the Vedas were the oldest Indo-Aryan scripture in the world, thus suggesting that the elite in Britain and in India shared a common spiritual heritage.

When Müller's English translation of the Rig Veda was finally published (1878–84), however, it failed to provide an analogy to holy books as the West had known them. These esoteric Sanskrit poems, magical invocations of the gods, were neither narrative nor didactic. They bore little resemblance to the Bible or the Qur'an. But where the Rig Veda had failed, the Ramayana (along with the Bhagavad Gita and the Mahabharata) seemed to fit the 19th-century definition of scripture. In addition, inspired by writings such as Alfred Lord Tennyson's **Idylls of the King** (1859) and Thomas Carlyle's books on heroes, scholars began searching other literatures for heroic, epic narratives: a criterion that the Ramayana—the story of the legendary sage-king Rama's struggle with the demon Ravana, who abducted Rama's wife Sita—satisfied perfectly. By 1900 the Ramayana had become the special focus of study and concern, and Western scholars cited its speeches on ethics, justice, and truth to prove that not only was morality at the heart of Indian religion but that it was a morality happily in harmony with British social ethics.

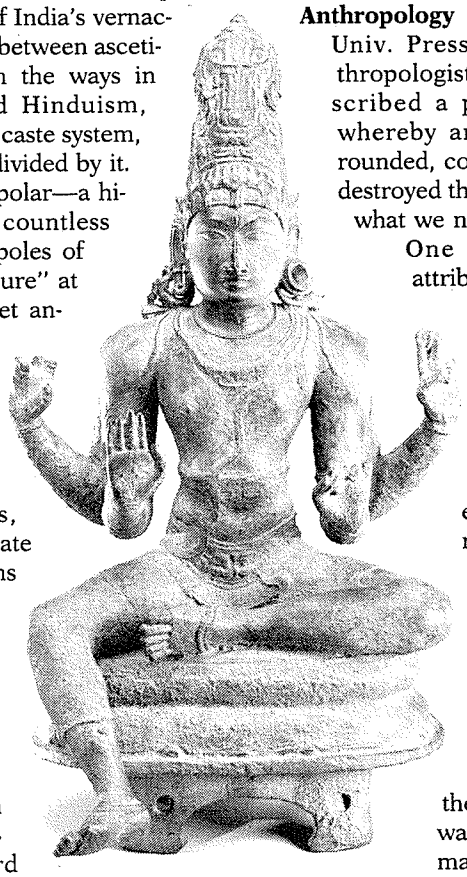
The fate of the Ramayana is one of the great ironies in the history of religion. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Western scholars attempted to simplify the infinitely complex melange of groups and ideas associated with Hinduism by linking them to one religious text, such as the Ramayana. But already by 1910, nationalists and other Western-influenced Indians were grabbing the work out of European scholars' hands and beginning to disseminate translations and inexpensive popular retellings to their countrymen. By the mid-20th century, the Ramayana was slowly becoming the central book of Hinduism. Yet, at the same time, Western scholars began to discover that Hinduism was more multifaceted and complex than any holy book (or books) could suggest.

In the last 30 years, modern scholarship on Hinduism has radically shifted its focus from holy scripture to ethnographic studies. After 1950 it became possible for Americans and Europeans to do extensive fieldwork in India, as British restrictions on such research went the way of the Raj. With ethnography came a new picture of almost overwhelming complexity.

The Indian sociologist M. N. Srinivas challenged the basic understanding of how contemporary Indian society worked, the notion that individuals advanced to the extent that they became Westernized. In **Caste in Modern India** (Asia Pub. House, 1962), Srinivas argued that the basic unit of Indian society is not the individual but the caste, and that castes advance through a process not of Westernization but of "Sanskritization." Sanskritization means abandoning local customs and adopting traditions associated with Sanskrit liturgy—such as the rules of purity in eating and in dress and the use of the Sanskrit language for ritual—which gradually moved diverse castes and tribes into the orthodox fold.

Even more influential than Srinivas was the French sociologist Louis Dumont, who, in **Homo Hierarchicus** (Univ. of Chicago, 1970), identified caste as the one unique characteristic

feature of the Hindu system and yet the cause of its vast diversity. In other words, although the acknowledgement of caste unites most Hindus, caste itself is a fragmenting force, making India a fragmented society. Paradoxically, Dumont said, it was those few who renounced the system to enter the fold of asceticism who provided the creative drive in Hinduism: Freed from rigid caste rules, these ascetics have produced, for example, much of India's vernacular literature. This division between asceticism and caste only began the ways in which Dumont described Hinduism, united on the surface by the caste system, as actually divided and subdivided by it. He defined caste as itself bipolar—a hierarchical structuring of countless small groups between the poles of "pure" at the top and "impure" at the bottom. This masked yet another polarity: Within the "pure" castes a conflict continued between the kings, who held political power, and the Brahman priests, who controlled the law. Caste, this suggests, masked but did not eliminate the enormous contradictions within Indian culture.



During the 1980s, scholars uncovered new ways in which Hinduism was more diverse and contradictory than had been supposed. Wendy Doniger in her **Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Shiva** (Oxford Univ. Press, 1973, reprinted as **Shiva, the Erotic Aesthetic**) offered the startling revelation that even God in his embodiment as Shiva lived in an eternal conflict between his roles as the paramount ascetic and as the source of all fertility, the font of the erotic. The Dutch sociologist J. C. Heesterman in **Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship and Society** (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985) plumbed the Vedas and discovered, instead of the sublime unity that Max Müller had found, an old warrior's world of sacred violence barely covered by an overlay of priestly ritual: Once again, an appreciation of complexity and even disorder replaced the older view of a harmonic Indian social order. In **Hinduism: The Anthropology of a Civilization** (Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), the French anthropologist Madeleine Biardeau described a process of "englobing" whereby an uneasy orthodoxy surrounded, covered, redefined but never destroyed the many constituent parts of what we now call Hinduism.

One of the most celebrated attributes of this diverse Hindu tradition has been its tolerance. Scholars must now confront the fact of a new fundamentalism within Hinduism, one that was in some sense the creation of earlier Orientalists who nailed Hinduism to scripture and then to the printed page. Although the scholarship and experiences of the last 30 years may have brought a new appreciation within the academic community of the multiculturalism that is or was "Hinduism," the fact remains that booksellers in the holy city of Ayodhya hawk, as though it were a Hindu fundamentalist gospel, *the* Ramayana. The issue of India's "true" religion, which Western scholars originally disputed with words, is now being fought with bricks and paid for in blood.

—Joanne Punzo Waghorne

Joanne Punzo Waghorne *is assistant professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Her publications include* Images of Dharma: The Epic World of C. Rajagopalachari *(1985).*

Adam Smith

Conscience of Capitalism

Suddenly, with the collapse of communism, Karl Marx is out, Adam Smith is in. But the Adam Smith we know, the author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) and the apostle of supposedly bare-knuckled capitalism, is only half the real man. In this essay, Charles L. Griswold, Jr. describes the efforts of this erudite Scottish professor of moral philosophy to imagine how liberal societies could devote themselves to both the pursuit of wealth and the creation of virtuous citizens. As the world rushes to embrace the economic system he championed, and as Americans continue to debate that system's costs, his ideas merit reconsideration.

by Charles L. Griswold, Jr.

Adam Smith is one of the best known, least read, and most often misunderstood thinkers of the 18th century. Most people know that he had something to do with classical economic theory and with capitalism, and those of conservative political bent will occasionally drop his name. In Ronald Reagan's White House, Adam Smith neckties were fashionable, and one of the nation's premier purveyors of financial advice has taken "Adam Smith" as his pen name. In socialist and formerly communist countries, Smith's name is probably linked to an unabashed defense of predatory laissez-faire capitalism, thanks largely to his role as one of Marx's opponents in the set-piece ideological battles of the communist classroom. Of course, his stock has risen a great deal recently in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Yet how many of those who cite Smith as an ally or attack him as an enemy have actually read his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776)? How many people know that Smith also wrote a major work in quite a different area, namely ethics? And among these, how many could claim to have read Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759)?

Smith is hardly the first philosopher to suffer neglect and misrepresentation. Epicurus (341–270 B.C.) was an advocate of strict morals and a critic of the pursuit of bodily pleasure, of wealth, and of honor, yet his name came to be synonymous with just those sorts of pursuits. Similarly, Smith now tends to be reduced to a proponent of crude acquisitive individualism. He is thought to have collapsed statecraft into economics, leaving the state with a narrow "night watchman" role of keeping the peace and protecting the nation from external predators as it rushes madly after wealth.

Scholars have largely abandoned these painful misreadings and have turned their

attention to many other, more interesting puzzles in his work, and the time is ripe for a broader reconsideration of Smith. The United States has echoed for more than a decade with running debates about capitalism's justice and effectiveness in generating wealth, the role of the state, and the (perhaps declining) role of 'morality' in American life. The challenges posed by great inequality of wealth, by individualism, by social and moral "decay" and by supposedly rampant greed—in sum, the problems of a liberal society—are now prominent on the national agenda. Liberal societies everywhere are faced with seemingly intractable problems—the poverty of the underclass, political apathy, and the atomization of communal life—that have always threatened pluralistic societies. But Smith's penetrating insights into these and other matters are now largely obscured.

At the same time, liberal capitalism also seems to be the most sustainable, legitimate form of social organization we have. The events of 1989 in Eastern Europe, the attempted revolution in China, the dismal failure of socialist and communist regimes in the Third World, and the impending dissolution of the Soviet Union, have pretty much condemned known forms of communism and socialism to the dust-bin of history. This conclusion is shared, with various degrees of reservation, by such influential philosophers as Richard Rorty and Jürgen Habermas (both self-described partisans of the Left) and, on the other end of the spectrum, by Pope John Paul II (in his recent encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*). As half the world abandons Marx and dashes headlong toward Smith, we are well-advised to reacquaint ourselves with capitalism's founding philosopher.

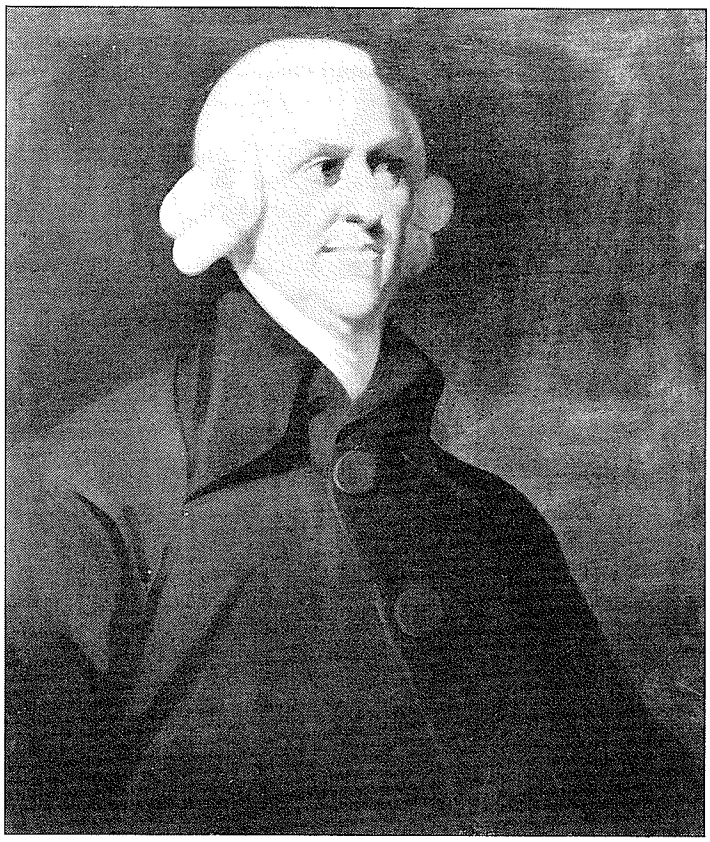
Smith was a luminary in what is now known as the Scottish Enlightenment. The qualification Scottish is meant to distinguish this Enlightenment from its cousins, such as the French, German, and American. Its chronological boundaries are disputed, but its leading figures are not: Francis Hutcheson, a philosopher who was one of Smith's teachers at Glasgow University and whose ideas were widely known in the American colonies; Lord Kames, a prolific writer and respected thinker; David Hume, one of the greatest philosophers of the modern period; and philosophers Adam Ferguson, John Millar, and Dugald Stewart, all friends or students of Smith's. Very roughly, then, this Enlightenment spanned most of the 18th century. It was a period of tremendous intellectual creativity not only in philosophy but in what we now call the social sciences (economics and sociology in particular) and the humanities (history, literature, and rhetoric), in addition to the "hard" sciences. Its major centers of learning were the great universities at Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen.

Historians have puzzled over the causes of this startling efflorescence in what is, after all, a stark and rather unlikely locale, variously suggesting such factors as the invigorating effects of Scotland's union with England in 1707 and the moral rigors of Scottish Calvinism. Hugh Trevor-Roper argues that it sprang from the Scots' preoccupation with the idea of progress, which burst upon them in the 18th century after 200 years of unnatural isolation from the rest of the world. "Travelled Scots might be artists, philosophers, architects; those at home might live in vertical towers, eating their way through one salt-beef after another, without a tree or a vegetable on the estate, treating their ailments with powdered toads, bottled woodlice and cataplasms of snails." Such spectacles of backwardness, Trevor-Roper believes, forced cosmopolitan Scots to contemplate "the social mechanism of progress. As [Walter] Bagehot would say of *The Wealth of Nations*, it showed 'how, from being a savage, man rose to be a Scotchman.'"

Trevor-Roper cites Hutcheson as the father of the Scottish Enlightenment and the English as the source of his inspiration. Yet the great thinkers of the Scottish Enlighten-

Charles L. Griswold, Jr., *a former Wilson Center Fellow, will become chairperson and professor of philosophy at Boston University this fall. At the Center he worked on a book tentatively entitled* Moral Psychology and Classical Liberalism: Virtue and Freedom in Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments. *His previous work includes* Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus *(Yale, 1986, 1988), which was awarded the F. J. Matchette Prize by the American Philosophical Association.*

ment were informed by many other factors, including not only contemporary developments on the Continent—Smith, for example, knew and admired Voltaire—but also ancient philosophy. Indeed, while many thinkers of the Continental Enlightenment took the modern side in the famous "quarrel between ancients and moderns," the great battles among the ancient Hellenistic schools—the Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics—were alive and well in Smith's Scotland, and were even reenacted within the Scottish Enlightenment. Smith knew Greek well, and, following in the footsteps of some of his great predecessors, such as Francis Hutcheson, he cast himself as a friend of the Stoics. Smith's friend David Hume, to cite another example, was thought to have taken up the cause of the Skeptics (and was also regarded by some scandalized observers as an atheist).



Adam Smith (1723–90) on the real magic of the marketplace: "In civilized society [a man] stands at all times in need of the cooperation and assistance of great multitudes, while his whole life is scarce sufficient to gain the friendship of a few friends."

Defining the Scottish Enlightenment as something distinct from the other European Enlightenments is somewhat like trying to define precisely what makes one Oriental tapestry different from another very similar one. Many of the detailed patterns may resemble each other, as might the general hues; and yet the overall designs may be distinct. By Smith's time, the Scottish Enlightenment had a distinctive concern with history and a corresponding lack of interest in metaphysics; a concern for psychology, rhetoric, and what became known as sociology, and a disinclination to work on epistemology and logic; and a concern for political economy and little enthusiasm for abstract moral debates. This is not to say that the Scots were not interested in morality. In fact, they tended to see themselves not just as advocates of a specific morality, but as the philosophical rescuers of what one might call the morality of the ordinary citizen from both the theological natural law tradition and metaphysically based moral systems.

Adam Smith was an only child, born in 1723 in Kirkcaldy, Scotland. His parents both came from minor landed families and his father, who died in the year of Smith's birth, held a middling but comfortable official post. One of the very few glimpses into Smith's private thoughts—he was a very poor correspondent and spurned diaries—concerns his mother, with whom he lived for long intervals later in life. On her death at the age of 90, this lifelong bachelor wrote to a friend that "the final separation from a person who certainly loved me more than any other person ever did or ever will love me; and

whom I certainly loved and respected more than I ever shall either love or respect any other person, I cannot help feeling, even at this hour, as a very heavy stroke upon me."

He was 14 when he set off for the University of Glasgow (the usual age at the time), where he was taught by the great Hutcheson and read (in the Greek and Latin originals) such works as Epictetus's *Encheiridion* and Grotius's *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*. Glasgow University was at that time relatively secular and enlightened, open to developments on the Continent, and that fact undoubtedly had much to do with the development of Smith's cosmopolitan outlook. In 1740, he went to train for the ministry at Oxford University but found the place a haven for stale ideas. "In the university of Oxford," he tartly observed, "the greater part of the public professors have, for these many years, given up altogether even the pretense of teaching." His leisure at Oxford nevertheless gave him a chance to read widely, and in particular to read David Hume's pathbreaking and threatening (to many) *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40). There, Hume argued (among other things) that what appear to be causal connections in the world are really just customary associations of events; reason, Hume said, "is and ought only to be the slave of the passions." One story has it that when Smith was discovered reading the *Treatise*, Oxford authorities immediately reprimanded him and snatched the pernicious work away.

Dour is a term that seems to apply itself automatically to Scots, but it does not quite seem to fit Smith. He was pretty clearly a man of stern character, strict discipline, skeptical disposition, and complete trustworthiness. Independent, needing little, self-directing, with his emotions under watchful supervision, he was in many ways the perfect Stoic. But he had a wide circle of friends from many walks of life, and entertained regularly. His friends and acquaintances included many of the most brilliant men of the age, from James Watt, inventor of the steam engine, to Edmund Burke. In Glasgow, where he returned to teach at the university in 1751, he joined several clubs that brought him into regular contact with the city's leading merchants and other men of affairs. Glasgow was a thriving city which dominated the tobacco trade with the American colonies and was developing a strong textile industry. Smith saw capitalism up close. He also gained a reputation as an efficient and fair administrator, but this supposed apostle of ruthlessly efficient capitalism was a notoriously absent-minded professor—"the most Absent Man that ever was," in the words of one observer.

The Theory of Moral Sentiments, published eight years after Smith returned to Glasgow, was the sort of first book that authors dream of.* It earned praise from the likes of Burke, Hume, and Immanuel Kant. Like the great Hume, Smith was attentive to style as well as substance, and no small part of his appeal is the great charm of his prose, which is among the finest in the history of philosophy. From London, Hume wrote a seemingly grim report, warning Smith that only false ideas are well received by the public. "I proceed to tell you the melancholy News," he continued, "that your Book has been very unfortunate: For the Public seem disposed to applaud it extremely. It was lookd for by the foolish People with some Impatience; and the Mob of Literati are beginning already to be very loud in its Praises."

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith took as one of his main topics the time-honored question of virtue. "[W]hat is the tone of temper and tenour of conduct, which constitutes the excellent and praiseworthy character, the character which is the natural object of esteem, honour, and approbation?"

In forming his answer, the founding father of "capitalist" doctrine did not draw upon traditional Christian thought so much as pagan thought. He did not think that morality is given to us from on high, and while he thought moral rules important, his system was not fundamentally based on the notion that morality consists in rule-like

*Further editions appeared in 1761, 1767, 1774, 1781, and finally 1790, the year of his death. The definitive edition of this book and of *The Wealth of Nations* is known as the Glasgow Edition, and is currently available through Liberty Press. Smith's constant revising of his two books suggests that he never abandoned his interest in the topics of the one book for the topics of the other, and also that he was something of a perfectionist, more interested in getting what he had to say right than in adding to the number of his publications.

commandments or imperatives.

Smith claimed that his teaching coincided in its essential respects with those of Plato and Aristotle. Virtue consists in "propriety," that is, in the expression of each passion in the degree appropriate to each situation. Virtue, Smith said, is the "mean" between the vices of defect and excess of the given passion. Thus, courage is the virtue that lies between the vices of cowardice and rashness; its appropriate expression is gauged in part by the context. Smith rejected ethical systems that make virtue consist solely in either prudence (linked by Smith to a doctrine of egoism or selfishness) or benevolence (which he linked to his teacher Hutcheson). These traits can be virtues, he conceded, but there are a number of other virtues as well, among which the Stoic virtue of self-command is especially important.

In the economic sphere, self-command translates, for Smith, into discipline and parsimony. On both economic and moral grounds he was a critic of what we would call conspicuous consumption or consumerism—although he also thought those vanities to be unavoidable, even necessary, in a commercial society.

The second large question Smith asked in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* was, as he put it, "by what power or faculty in the mind is it, that this [excellent and praiseworthy] character, whatever it be, is recommended to us?" This is a question in the "psychology of ethics" or what philosophers now call "moral psychology."

Why, the question goes, do we consider certain characters to be morally praiseworthy? Smith, the purported radical individualist, argued that humans are deeply social beings, with a certain capacity for mutual understanding that he called "sympathy"—a term he defined as "our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever"—as well as a natural motivation to care for others. How are we able to enter into another's world "sympathetically"? By the imagination, Smith answered, the most crucial human faculty. For him, the human being is the animal having imagination—rather than, as Aristotle had it, the animal having reason.

Thanks to our human "sympathy," we are able both to see things from another's perspective, *and* to evaluate his response to an ethical situation. We do not just feel another's feelings; we place ourselves in his situation and then judge whether his response to it was adequate. When a person responds angrily to an insult, as spectators we exercise our moral imagination, enter into the situation, consider both the harm done and the motivation of the offender, and then reach a judgment about the propriety of the person's anger.

But, Smith continued, "as nature teaches the spectators to assume the circumstances of the person principally concerned, so she teaches this last in some measure to assume those of the spectators." The process is analogous to the mutual adjustment of supply and demand in a free market.

Smith put great stress on *impartiality*, and impartiality entails accurate information, adequate moral imagination, and, of course, absence of bias. As a result, Smith is often said to have an "impartial spectator" moral theory. This could be contrasted with important contemporary moral theories, such as utilitarianism, as well as to theologically based theories.

Smith's is an inter-subjective approach to ethics. As I said, Smith did not think that morals descend from the heavens; nor did he think that there is some other entirely independent, objective referent for moral terms. He wrote that "if we consider all the different passions of human nature, we shall find that they are regarded as decent, or indecent, just in proportion as mankind are more or less disposed to sympathize with them." Of course, Smith allowed, moral judgments may sometimes be guided by generalizations culled from repeated experiences, but these rules can always be called into question or altered.

For Smith, the moral imagination is the glue that holds society together. As we judge others so they judge us; we learn early on to view ourselves through the eyes of others, to imagine what they are imagining about us. Society is almost a theatrical affair. As we seek the approval of others and they of us—keeping the glue sticky, so to speak—we are bound to each other's praise and blame. We also learn early on that people make mistakes about us, and therefore learn that they can be misinformed and partial. There is a difference between being

(dis)approved of, and being worthy of that (dis)approval. "Nature, accordingly, has endowed [man], not only with a desire of being approved of, but with a desire of being what ought to be approved of," Smith said. We learn to imagine a *really* impartial spectator as our judge, and hold ourselves accountable to that higher authority.

So powerful are our imaginations that we frequently ascribe emotions to other people that they are incapable of feeling. "We sympathize even with the dead," Smith believed. "The idea of that dreary and endless melancholy, which the fancy naturally ascribes to their condition, arises... from our putting ourselves in their situation, and from our lodging, if I may be allowed to say so, our own living souls in their inanimated bodies, and thence conceiving what would be our emotions in this case. It is from this very illusion of the imagination, that the foresight of our own dissolution is so terrible to us, and that the idea of those circumstances, which undoubtedly can give us no pain when we are dead, makes us miserable while we are alive. And from thence arises one of the most important principles in human nature, the dread of death, the great poison to the happiness, but the great restraint upon the injustice of mankind, which, while it afflicts and mortifies the individuals, guards and protects the society."

This wonderful passage is vintage Smith: Seemingly negative phenomena (such as the dread of death) have unexpected positive consequences (the restraint of injustice).

But Smith warned that the imagination can also lead to corruption; so he thought it important to foster the right sorts of institutions to channel the imagination productively. Religion is one such institution. Unlike Marx, Smith did not take religion to be the opium of the people, nor did he think that the religious impulse can, or should, be extirpated. Religion develops naturally from the moral imagination (although Smith allowed that it has other sources as well). It "gave a sanction to the rules of morality, long before the age of artificial reasoning and philosophy," and continued to do so when human devices failed. It gave comfort in the face of death and, in less "enlightened" times, offered explanations of natural phenomena.

Smith, like many thinkers of his day, recognized the social value of religion, but not the personal value. There is little evidence that he was involved in organized religion, and almost everything in his written works suggests that he believed that the divine—certainly the divine understood as a personal God—lives only in the human imagination. When Smith wrote an account of Hume's death in 1776 showing that the great Skeptic met his end calmly, Edmund Burke sardonically claimed in a letter that both performances were "done for the credit of their Church"—atheism. Also like many of his contemporaries, including Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, Smith was deeply concerned about the danger of religious fanaticism. "Of all the corrupters of moral sentiment...," he declared, "faction and fanaticism have always been by far the greatest."

It was in *The Wealth of Nations* that Smith proposed his most ingenious antidote to religious fanaticism, but first there was to be a detour in his life. In 1763, he resigned from his post at Glasgow in order to leave for France as traveling tutor to Henry Scott, third Duke of Buccleuch. In fact, it was in France that he began work on his famous second book. On the Continent he met Voltaire (whom he praised) and other *philosophes*, as well as leading French economists such as the physiocrats Quesnay and Turgot. "You will find him a man of true merit," his friend Hume said of Smith in a letter of introduction to a Paris socialite, "though perhaps his sedentary recluse life may have hurt his air and appearance as a man of the world." Hume need not have worried; there is some evidence that Smith was even a minor hit with the ladies of the Paris salons. In any event, his reputation as the author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* preceded him and he enjoyed an active social life.

In the providential year of 1776, a decade after his return from France, Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*.* It, too, made a tremendous splash, and trans-

*Smith brought out a second edition of *The Wealth of Nations* in 1778, followed by further revised editions in 1784, 1786, and 1789.

formed him into a truly major figure whose ideas were known and discussed on both sides of the Atlantic.

At various times, Smith also counselled members of the British government, and some of his economic ideas were reflected in government policies. (Asked for his advice on dealing with the American colonies, he favored, short of a kind of federal union with Britain akin to that advocated by his acquaintance Benjamin Franklin, granting them freedom.) In 1778 he was appointed Commissioner of Customs for Scotland, a post he discharged faithfully until his death in 1790. The irony of the appointment of free trade's great advocate to this post was not lost on his contemporaries. Edward Gibbon, the historian, gently pointed it out to his friend. (Smith, however, might not have seen a conflict, for he always argued that pure economic efficiency must sometimes be sacrificed for reasons of state, such as providing for national defense.)

In *The Wealth of Nations* Smith argued that a competitive free market of religions must be encouraged if religion is to perform its constructive social role without corrupting the nation's politics and the individual's conscience. He proposed, in a sense, to balance religious factions against one another, and to assign the state the role of preventing any one church from obtaining a monopoly or advancing its aims through the use of force. This solution strikingly foreshadows James Madison's famous proposals in the *Federalist* for controlling civil strife. Smith wrote: The "teachers of each sect, seeing themselves surrounded on all sides with more adversaries than friends, would be obliged to learn that candour and moderation which is so seldom to be found among the teachers of those great sects, whose tenets being supported by the civil magistrate, are held in veneration by almost all the inhabitants of extensive kingdoms and empires, and who therefore see nothing round them but followers, disciples, and humble admirers."

A free market of religions would, Smith hoped, "probably reduce the doctrine of the greater part of them [the sects] to that pure and rational religion, free from every mixture of absurdity, imposture, or fanaticism, such as wise men have in all ages of the world wished to see established."

Controlling religious fanaticism and faction is necessary not only to civil peace, Smith wanted to stress, but to liberty. If people are to govern themselves in a free republic, they must somehow free themselves from superstition and fanaticism. The relationship between liberal institutional arrangements (such as the separation of church and state) and virtue was circular for Smith. The wrong arrangements foster fanaticism and corruption, which in turn sustain illiberal institutions. Smith believed that liberal political structures support morality and in turn are supported by it.

Smith also thought that religion would be needed to help generate a sense of community in a large commercial republic. Workers, he worried, would easily succumb to the anonymity of growing cities. In contrast to a "man of rank and fortune," a "man of low condition . . . is far from being a distinguished member of any great society. While he remains in a country village his conduct may be attended to, and he may be obliged to attend to it himself. In this situation, and in this situation only, he may have what is called a character to lose. But as soon as he comes into a great city, he is sunk in obscurity and darkness. His conduct is observed and attended to by nobody, and he is therefore very likely to neglect it himself, and to abandon himself to every sort of low profligacy and vice. He never emerges so effectually from this obscurity, his conduct never excites so much the attention of any respectable society, as by his becoming the member of a small religious sect."

Yet vigorous small sects, even when balanced by competing sects, may enforce morals that are too strict. So Smith thought that the state should encourage the arts. "Publick diversions have always been the objects of dread and hatred, to all the fanatical promoters of those popular frenzies," he observed. "The gaiety and good humour which those diversions inspire were altogether inconsistent with that temper of mind, which was fittest for their purpose, or which they could best work upon. Dramatick representations besides, fre-

quently exposing their artifices to publick ridicule, and sometimes even to publick execration, were upon that account, more than all the other diversions, the objects of their peculiar abhorrence."

These remarks were written against the backdrop of a 2,000-year history of philosophical debate (going back at least to Plato) about the benefits and dangers of the theater. In Smith's own time, Rousseau took a much more negative view, arguing that the modern theater corrupts morals and detracts from genuine community.

Where does the pursuit of wealth fit into this picture? It may come as a shock to realize that Adam Smith was no admirer of the tycoon and magnate. In keeping with an ancient tradition that goes back to Aristotle and Plato, he viewed the pursuit of wealth as potentially corrupting. It is based, in Smith's view, on a fantasy: People believe that acquiring wealth and power will make them happy because others will admire them. Of course, this is a vain pursuit. For Smith as for the Stoics, true happiness consists in tranquility. But the illusion that wealth will bring happiness is not altogether bad. Like religion, if properly constrained and institutionalized, the wealth-getting impulse has its uses. The self-interested are led to labor, to produce, to create through the "invisible hand"—a phrase used only once in each of Smith's two published books—what Smith is pleased to call "civilization."

"For to what purpose is all the toil and bustle of this world? what is the end of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth, of power, and preeminence? Is it to supply the necessities of nature?" No, he answered in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Wealth-getting has less to do with gaining ease or pleasure than with vanity. But "it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner. It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind." While distinctions arise among classes and ranks, even the rich "in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their own conveniency, though the sole end which they propose from the labours of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species." (This was part of Smith's controversial reply to Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* [1761].)

But Adam Smith was nothing if not a balanced thinker. The invisible hand, he recognized, could also produce bad results—such as business monopolies. "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion," wrote this acerbic observer of the business class in *The Wealth of Nations*, "but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the publick, or in some contrivance to raise prices. It is impossible indeed to prevent such meetings .... But though the law cannot hinder people of the same trade from sometimes assembling together, it ought to do nothing to facilitate such assemblies; much less to render them necessary."

Self-interest thus yields its fruits only when the state provides the proper legal and economic framework. But the state's responsibilities do not end there. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith argued that the division of labor was the key to prosperity, but he acknowledged with surprising frankness the human costs of economic progress. Factory workers, Smith noted in *The Wealth of Nations*, in language worthy of a Marxist critic of capitalism, might be reduced to "that drowsy stupidity, which, in a civilized society, seems to benumb the understanding of almost all the inferior ranks of people." The worker's "dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expence of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues. But in every improved and civilized society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people, must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it."

What pains? Compulsory schooling in the basics of reading, writing, and

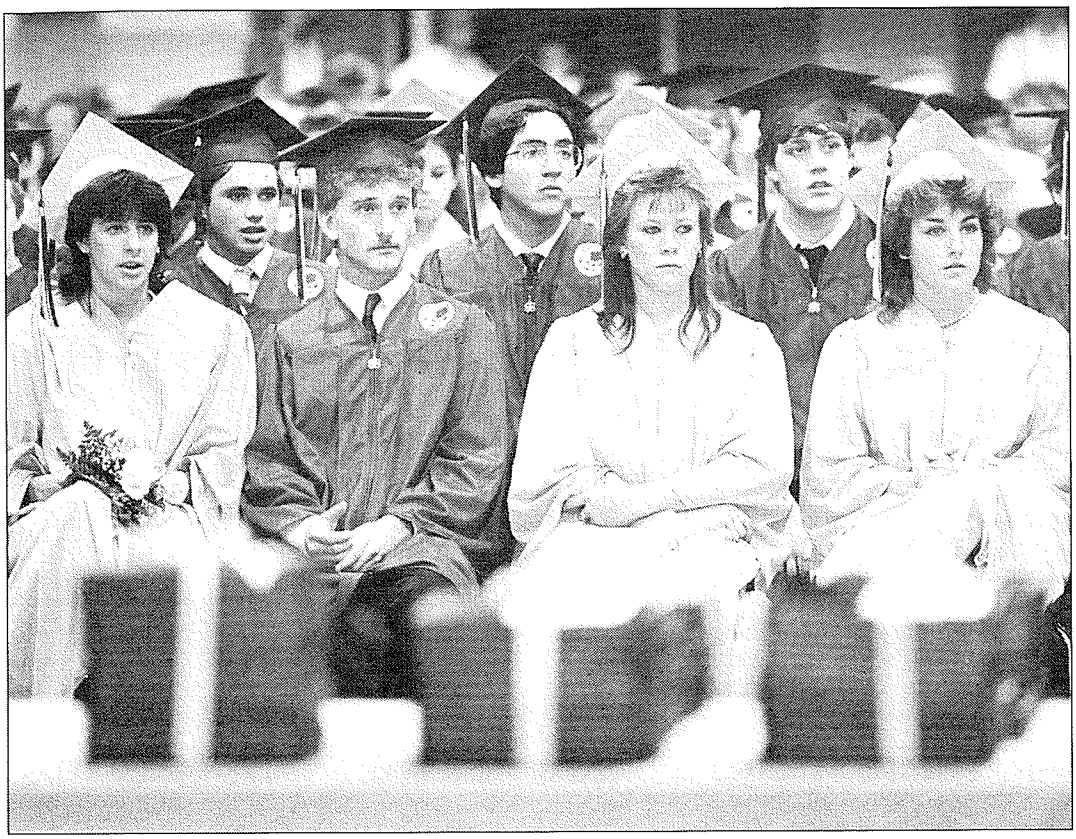
arithmetic for the mass of men, and, for tradespeople, in science and philosophy as well. As Smith remarked, "science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition; and where all the ranks of people were secured from it, the inferior ranks could not be much exposed to it." Liberal education is to rescue liberal society from the harm done by its own debilitating labor. The acquisition of wealth and the preservation of virtue were not, for Smith, in natural harmony.

In Smith's scheme of things, the government is left to perform various public works (such as education), and to protect society from invasion and its citizens from one another. These functions supply a wide entrance for government intervention in society. The thrust of Smith's whole argument, however, is in the direction of less rather than more intervention. The "obvious and simple system of natural liberty established itself of its own accord," he maintained. "Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order of men. The sovereign is completely discharged from a duty, in the attempting to perform which he must always be exposed to innumerable delusions, and for the proper performance of which no human wisdom or knowledge could ever be sufficient; the duty of superintending the industry of private people, and of directing it towards the employments most suitable to the interest of the society."

This seems to leave us with another Smithean paradox. If the desire to better one's own condition beyond the mere necessities of life is based on an illusion, is not the free-market system that encourages this illusion premised on a fundamental lack of self-knowledge? How could a Stoic like Smith, who claims that true happiness lies in tranquillity, affirm capitalism?

I think that the solution to this puzzle depends in part on a distinction between ideal and non-ideal worlds. In the best world, we would all be Stoics and live far more fulfilled lives. In the world we actually inhabit, chasing a fantasy is the order of the day. But the "real" world, if properly structured, can still produce a measure of fulfillment, liberty, and creativity.

Balance is again Smith's watchword: Just as the real world is neither simply good nor simply bad, the pursuit of the ideal world can also be destructive. Smith was an anti-utopian political thinker, deeply suspicious of what he called the "man of system" who thinks he can reform human nature or move people around like pieces on a chess board in the name of some grand design. Even pursuit of the Stoic ideal has its perils, for a pure Stoic would be almost superhuman in his self control. The ideal must always be balanced by the non-ideal. The satisfaction offered the contemplative philosopher seems to consist in apprehension of this balanced whole. It is not a formula for political quietism or moral passivity, I think, so much as for a measure of mental tranquillity—a satisfaction that Smith had, by all accounts, found for himself.



Why celebrate? Members of the high school class of '91 spent only 13 percent of their waking hours in a classroom, and test scores showed that it was not "quality time."

Why the Schools Still Don't Work

When the kids in the high school class of '91 started kindergarten more than a decade ago, Jimmy Carter was in the White House and back-to-basics advocates were clamoring for school reform. When they were in fourth grade, the National Commission on Excellence in Education warned of a "rising tide of mediocrity." When they were sophomores, the nation elected "the education president." Yet little changed. As things now stand, there is not much reason to hope that the class of '03, entering kindergarten this fall, will emerge any better educated. Here, Chester E. Finn, Jr., explains why the excellence movement of the 1980s fell short, and Patrick Welsh offers a teacher's view of the schools' problems—and a major reform that he says won't cost a dime.

THE HO HUM REVOLUTION

by Chester E. Finn, Jr.

"Christine borrows $850 for one year from the Friendly Finance Company. If she pays 12% simple interest on the loan, what will be the total amount that Christine repays?"

That is not the sort of question that ought to stump many people. Yet according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, in 1988 only *six percent* of the nation's 11th graders were able to solve mathematical problems at this moderate level of difficulty. Six out of 100. After more than a decade of efforts to reform the nation's schools, and eight years after the National Commission on Excellence in Education's famous alarm, *A Nation at Risk*, it would be nice to be able to take up the time-honored theme of "crisis and renewal." But as the insoluble question posed by the case of the Friendly Finance Company suggests, there has not yet been much of a renewal.

That is not because we have ignored our shortcomings. During the last decade, national leaders such as Secretary of Education William J. Bennett took to the bully pulpit to rouse the public. Americans were bombarded by alarming news stories and reports of gloomy studies on the nation's front pages and TV news broadcasts. An "excellence movement" was born, and it inspired many reform efforts around the country. Governors and legislators began to shake off the old taboo against "tampering" with the schools, pushing a variety of reforms long resisted by many education professionals. Dozens of communities launched school innovations. But it wasn't enough. The system's vital signs, as measured by test scores and other indicators, remained flat. Things got no worse, but they didn't get better, either. Before venturing any new therapies, then, it would be prudent to take a full case history of the patient.

Among the therapies tried during the 1980s, for example, was more money, a truth that many professionals resist. In school-year 1979–80, ending a few weeks before Ronald Reagan first won his party's nomination for the presidency, the average expenditure per pupil in American public schools was $2,491. Ten years later, during the first complete school year of the Bush administration, the average outlay per student was $5,284—or about $121,000 per classroom. That represents a 111 percent rise in current dollars, or, in constant (1988–89) dollars, a hefty 28.7 percent expansion. This came on the heels of real increases of 26.8 percent in the 1970s and 57.7 percent in the 1960s.

These increases were not uniform, to be sure—and a bit of the per pupil expenditure rise can be ascribed to a slight (3.3 percent) shrinkage in public school enrollments. Illinois boosted its spending for public education by just 49 percent between 1980 and 1989, not quite keeping pace with inflation, while Georgia expanded its school outlays by 166 percent. Localities were subject to even greater variation. For the nation as a whole, though, the 29 percent real dollar figure is accurate. Perhaps it was not enough. Conceivably it was too much. I know nobody, however,

who claims that the *output* of American public education rose by anything approaching 29 percent during the 1980s.

Most of the new money, of course, went into salaries of school employees, always the largest single item in education budgets. The salaries of public school teachers have been rising—another fact that many in the profession tend not to mention. When the 1980s opened, the typical U.S. public school teacher was paid $15,970; when the decade closed, $31,278. In few other fields did earnings double during this period. (The growth in real dollars was a significant 27 percent.) Again, one may feel that the rise was inadequate. Certainly it was unevenly spread around the map. But one cannot, it seems to me, credibly assert that the primary explanation for the weak results posted by the reforms of the 1980s is fiscal parsimony, budgetary retrenchment, or neglect of teachers. We pumped more money into education than ever before.

The 1980s also saw a dramatic shift in the apportionment of assignments between Washington and the states. Although the federal government plays a small and mostly peripheral role in American education, it had catalyzed many of the changes of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Indeed, within the field the view was widely held that states and localities were responsible for operating the basic system but that Washington should instigate and pay for innovations and experiments. This changed dramatically in the 1980s. While the Excellence Commission was unmistakably a creature of the federal government, in its diagnosis and recommendations it barely alluded to Washington. This distinction is crucial for purposes of understanding the reform efforts that followed (and in some cases anticipated) *A Nation at Risk*. The old assumptions were thoroughly entangled with the goals of improved access to schooling and greater equality that had propelled education reform for so long. Great progress had been made toward meeting these goals—today just about everybody can have just about as much education as they want. (For example, more than half of U.S. high school graduates go on to college, an astounding proportion by international standards.) It was not unimaginable that a major shift in priorities would be accompanied by different roles for the major actors.

State leaders had reasons of their own to take up the challenge. Public anxiety about education quality was visible by 1983 in one poll and survey after another. "By 1981, when I ran for governor, disillusionment with the schools was widespread," former New Jersey Governor (1981–89) Tom Kean recalls.

By the 1980s, education was the largest single item in the budget of every state government, a sponge soaking up vast sums of local revenue as well. By 1986–7, elementary-secondary education accounted for a quarter of all state and local spending. (Higher education absorbed an additional 9 percent.) It was reasonable to ask whether sufficient return was being earned on this immense public investment. Certainly it was *unreasonable* to forswear involvement in decisions about its uses.

Scholars will forever debate how strong the tie between the quality of schooling and the vitality of the economy really is, but Americans take the idea seriously. "Never," Kean wrote in 1988, "has the link between

Chester E. Finn, Jr., *is professor of education and public policy at Vanderbilt University and director of the Washington-based Educational Excellence Network. He was U.S. assistant secretary of education during 1985–88. This essay is adapted from* We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future.

education and the economy been clearer or more compelling."

Better education held out the possibility not just of remedying shortcomings but also of gaining advantage, and not only for the whole country but perhaps even for one's region or state. This opportunity was first grasped by civic and business leaders in the Southeast. The Carolinas, Tennessee, Florida, Arkansas, and even Mississippi began to echo with talk of an economic renaissance built on improved education. Living in Nashville in the early 1980s, I could not count the number of times I heard Governor (now U.S. Secretary of Education) Lamar Alexander argue for education reform by declaring, "Better schools mean better jobs for Tennesseans, young and old."

Back to basics: Joe Clark, a high school principal in Paterson, New Jersey, won national attention with his get-tough approach. But his students' academic achievement did not greatly improve.

From the education profession, too, flowed a stream of books, studies, and reports by such well-regarded authors as Theodore Sizer, John Goodlad, Mortimer Adler, and Ernest Boyer. Though their explanations and recommendations varied, none disputed the basic message of the Excellence Commission: American youngsters were leaving school with insufficient skills and meager knowledge, the country was weakened by this situation, and setting matters right was going to require a number of basic alterations in long-established ideas and practices.

Meanwhile, the bleak data kept piling up. The annual release of college admissions test scores became a major media event—and the news was not getting brighter. Every two years, the federally sponsored National Assessment of Educational Progress added to the gloom by reporting elementary and secondary achievement scores. And so, the excellence movement of the 1980s gathered strength.

As it grew, it revealed several basic characteristics. Unlike school reformers of the past, those of the 1980s were not interested in more money and resources as ends in themselves but as means to a larger end, stronger cognitive learning. As a result, they were remarkably open-minded about means, willing to try almost anything that might work.

The movement was also state-centered. Dozens of local educators eventually embraced the goals of the excellence movement, and by decade's end some notable school reforms had been launched in communities as far-flung as Chicago, San Diego,

Miami, and Chelsea, Massachusetts. Yet historians will view the 1980s as a period in which American education became markedly less local in its policy direction and governance. The states had always held in reserve the authority to direct education; yet most had been cautious, bureaucratic, and incrementalist, leaving bold ideas and striking initiatives to the federal government and innovation-prone municipalities. Now the states came to the fore, prodding, pulling, tempting, pleading, and sometimes simply commanding local schools, teachers, principals, administrators, and children to change their ways.

A structural change at least as momentous was the shift of leadership and influence from the education profession and its specialized governance structures—the state and local school boards and committees, with their superintendents and other credentialed executives—to the laity, especially to elected political leaders. Believing that war is too important to be left solely to soldiers, Americans have ensured civilian control of the military. During the 1980s, the civilians sought control of the schools. It was clear that the traditional managers of the system had permitted mediocrity to spread. So long as they were insulated from political influence, they would likely continue marching to their own drummers—and mediocrity would persist as well.

One tactic for breaking that pattern was to strip away the insulation and make the system more directly subject to political guidance and public accountability. And as governors, legislators, and mayors started to delve into policy domains heretofore entrusted to experts, school boards, and other specialized bodies, they found that the idea that politicians ought not meddle with schools was not a sacred principle. No lightning bolts struck them down.

Governors (and, in some communities, mayors) evolved into *de facto* school superintendents, and state legislatures behaved like giant boards of education. Though they still did not select principals or hire teachers, manage schools, or award diplomas, they injected themselves into matters of curriculum and school organization, the testing of students and teachers, the criteria by which school employees are compensated, and much more.

The excellence movement produced 10 classic types of school reform. To my knowledge, no jurisdiction attempted all of these, but I mention none that was not actually tried somewhere.

1. *Standards for students.* Inasmuch as boosting student learning was the supreme goal of reformers, it is no surprise that some sought the straightest path to that destination: explicitly requiring boys and girls to meet higher achievement norms. This was also the strategy with the most precedent, if one recalls the "minimum competency exams" adopted in the 1970s by many states.

Achievement tests that youngsters must pass as a condition for receiving their diplomas remained one popular version of this strategy. Another—echoing the Excellence Commission—was to enlarge the number of academic courses that high school students had to take before graduating. All but five states boosted their graduation requirements between 1980 and 1990. Still another approach was the construction of "promotional gates" imposing performance standards as a precondition for moving to the next grade level. Or something students prized was made to hinge upon meeting a certain standard. Thus several states and localities adopted "no pass, no play" rules, under which students could play on school athletic teams (and, sometimes, participate in other activities) only by maintaining a certain grade point average or not failing any courses. To reduce

the drop-out rate some states withheld driver's licenses from youngsters leaving school before turning 18.

2. *Standards for teachers.* Untalented and ill-prepared teachers were widely and plausibly deemed a barrier to educational excellence. If student standards could be raised via mandatory examinations, why not fashion a similar approach for their instructors? And so, where just 10 states had required teachers to take competency tests in 1980, by decade's end 44 of them obliged new teachers to pass written exams before being certified.

There was little resistance, save sometimes by colleges of education, to the idea, at least so long as the passing mark was not too high. The explosive issue was forcing veteran instructors to take a test—or to meet any other new standard. State teacher unions were adamantly opposed. There was no way they could go along with jeopardizing the tenured jobs that most of their members held. Besides, they and others asked, how much of what you really want to know about a teacher's skills can be determined by a paper-and-pencil exam? In the end, just three states (Georgia, Arkansas, Texas) obliged all teachers to take a written test. And this was accompanied by such acrimony—Texas governor Mark White lost his 1986 re-election bid in no small part because of furious opposition to his innovative teacher testing program—so many chances to retake the test and, finally, by passing scores pegged to such humble levels of actual attainment, that it is unlikely that this form of standard-setting will be widely used in the near future.

Observing the political cost of testing classroom veterans, other states and localities chose instead to adopt more complex evaluations that teachers may undergo en route to higher levels of rank, status, and pay. All teacher appraisal schemes are fraught with controversy, at least among educators, but policymakers have been able to prevail with the voluntary kind so long as they lead not to grief for those who fail but only to benefits for those who pass.

3. *Changes in teacher recruitment, education, and licensure.* One enduring bit of folk wisdom about American education is that courses given by teacher education programs are near-worthless and consume so much of future teachers' college schedules that they leave little time for mastering the subjects they will one day be teaching. Few institutions are so widely despised as the teachers' college. "The willingness to endure four years in a typical school of education," asserts Boston University President John Silber, "often constitutes an effective negative intelligence test."

Reform strategies under this heading can be sorted into four types. First, efforts to attract able people, especially minority group members, into the teaching profession by creating high status programs, special scholarships, forgivable loans, and other inducements and concessions—all in addition to the general teacher salary escalation of the decade.

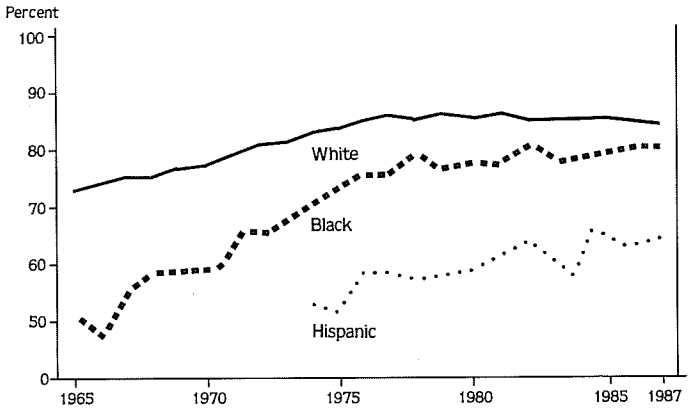
Second, efforts to lift the intellectual standards of teacher education programs by raising entrance (or graduation) criteria or by mandating changes in their curricula and practices.

Third, efforts to beef up the subject matter knowledge of future teachers by boosting liberal arts requirements or—an initiative taken by one group of institutions—shifting all "professional" courses to the graduate level, leaving the undergraduate years to the arts and sciences. (That makes teachers look more like other professionals by equipping them all with graduate degrees, but it also raises the cost of becoming a teacher.)

Fourth, and boldest, 48 states have opened alternate paths into teaching, such

THE (SOMEWHAT) GOOD NEWS . . .

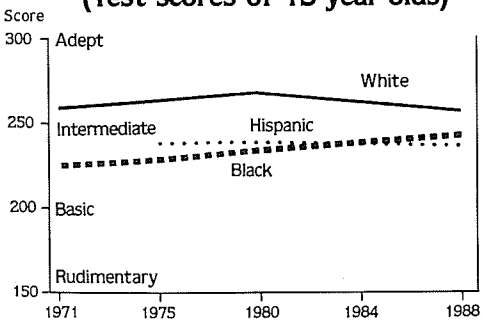
Finishing High School
(25- to 29-year-olds with at least 12 years of school)



If the quality of U.S. education has not increased, at least the quantity has. As the chart above shows, more Americans (86 percent) complete high school than ever before. Surveys also show (at right) a decline in illegal drug use among students. And while overall reading test scores have remained flat (below), there has been a very slight improvement among minority students.

Getting Away From Drugs
(High School Seniors Using Illegal Drugs)

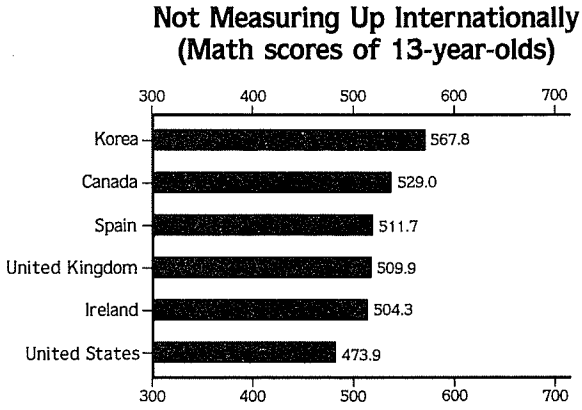
Learning to Read
(Test scores of 13-year-olds)

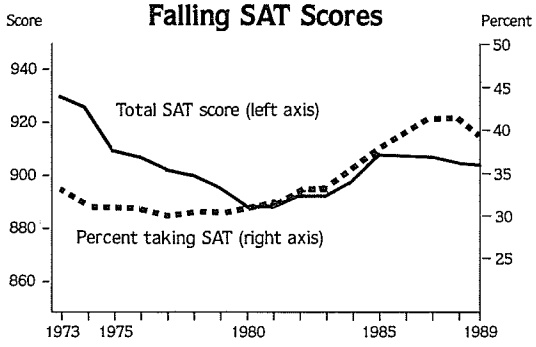


Source: *The Condition of Education 1990, Vol. 1, Elementary and Secondary Education*, published by the National Center for Education Statistics, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

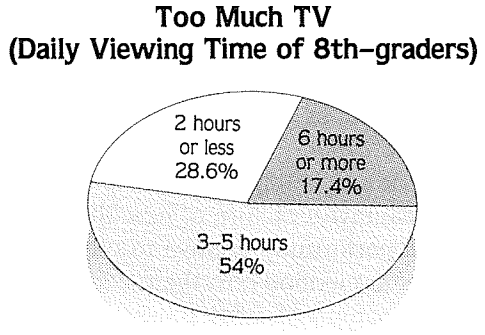
THE BAD NEWS

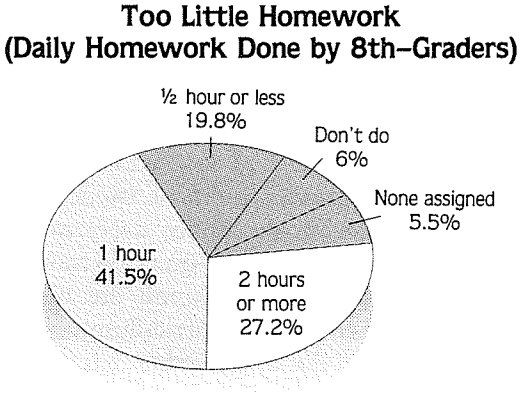
In international comparisons of academic achievement, American students are invariably near the bottom.





Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of the college-bound have dropped. Meanwhile, more and more students are taking the test. (The top score possible: 1,600.)





Virtually all American children devote more time to television than to homework. The average eighth-grader spends 21 hours in front of the Idiot Box every week and perhaps five hours doing homework. Studies suggest that American youngsters do much less homework than their peers overseas.

that it is no longer essential for all prospective instructors to complete a university-based pre-service teacher training program. Such programs have particular appeal for mid-career people with liberal arts degrees who during their college days had not planned to become teachers.

4. *Curriculum change.* No aspect of American education is in greater disarray, yet no decision about education is more basic than what the children will study. If they are not learning enough history or geography, for example, why not overhaul the social studies curriculum to pay greater heed to those fields? This approach to education reform had many advocates during the 1980s, conspicuously including then-Education Secretary William Bennett and E. D. Hirsch, author of the best-selling book, *Cultural Literacy* (1987). They had logic and common sense on their side. Dry as it sounds, revising the curriculum means rethinking exactly what students should learn. When harmonized with textbook selections, teacher preparation, and student testing, this may well be the soundest approach to education reform. It is now being tried in a number of localities and states, with particular finesse in California, where Bill Honig, the dynamic state superintendent of public instruction, has chosen it as his primary reform strategy.

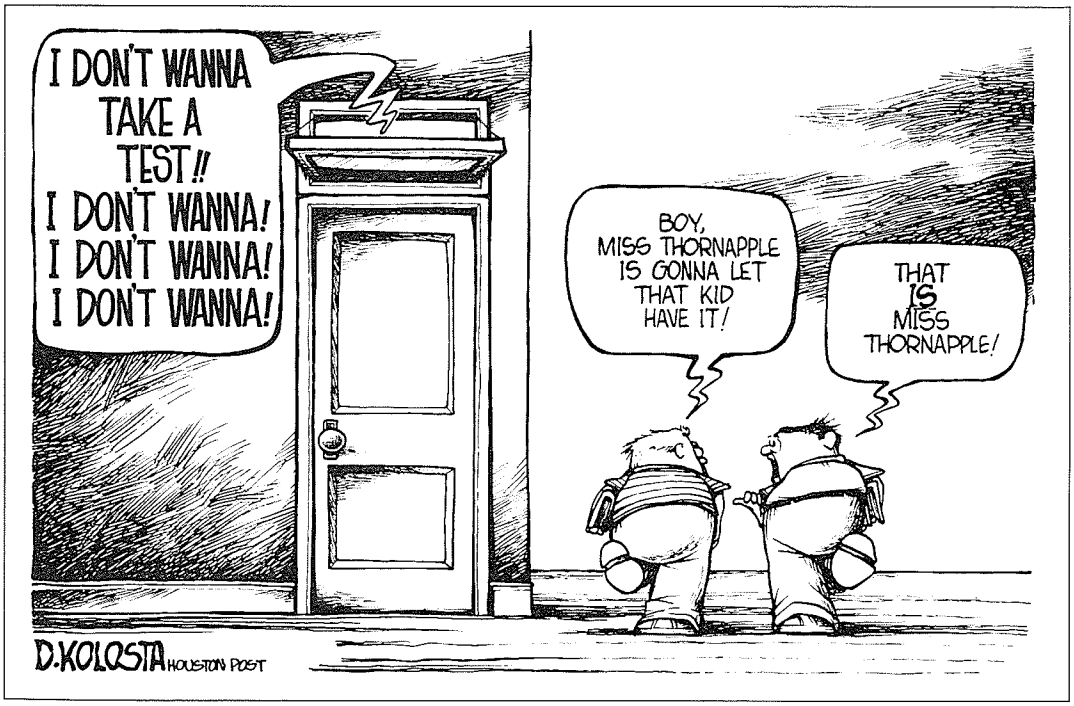
Curriculum revision may, however, also be the approach least suited to mandates by lay policymakers. It is complex, tedious, and technical. And few education issues generate greater political friction. Every tension within the polity, every argument about the culture, and every division in the population descends upon the operating room whenever the curriculum undergoes surgery. So do innumerable fads and fears. The textbook guidelines that Honig inherited in California, for example, banned pictures of children eating ice cream cones, a prohibition inserted at the behest of nutrition advocacy groups. The businessman or legislator seized by a simple notion—"children in this state should learn more geography" (or science, literature, or whatever)—can scarcely imagine the fracas that will erupt as people seek to put flesh on the bones of his idea. Nor can he imagine how resented he will be by an education profession that dislikes lay "meddling" in curricular matters.

5. *Testing and assessment.* Testing comes under the broad heading of "accountability" mechanisms: ways of furnishing parents, policymakers, and educators with accurate information about the efficacy of their efforts. The American education system has an aversion to clear consumer information about results and outcomes; it is not too much to say that it has been engaged in a massive cover-up. While there is a surfeit of data about the schools, very little of it measures *results.* And data that are relevant nearly always suffer from two basic weaknesses. Either they report results only for the country as a whole—as the highly publicized National Assessment of Educational Progress tests have done (save a recent small experiment)—or they report results for youngsters in individual states and localities in ways that make it impossible to compare them with other jurisdictions, with national standards, or with international competitors. This is true even of the otherwise laudable assessment systems created by California, Connecticut, and several other states during the 1980s.

As a rule, it is impossible for parents to get a meaningful picture of how their children are performing relative to other children, not to mention how their local school is doing compared with other schools in the community, with state or national goals, or even with its own past performance. Indeed, in 1987, a West Virginia physician named John J. Cannell made the amazing

discovery that the six commercially prepared tests widely used in the nation's elementary schools, among them the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Metropolitan Achievement Test, were structured in such a way that no state's scores appeared to be below average! Ninety percent of local school districts and 70 percent of students tested, Cannell found in a study that has since been confirmed in its essentials, were told that they were performing above the national average.

6. *Incentives and Rewards.* Better data on results are not sufficient. People also have to be motivated. Accordingly, rewards for success—prizes, bonuses, or awards for students, teachers, principals, and entire schools—and interventions in response to failure proliferated during the 1980s. But with its entrenched ethos of equity and marked distaste for comparisons, the education system turns skittish when individuals or schools are singled out, even for rewards. Far greater anxiety is roused when unpleasant actions are triggered by failure. Hence the battle lines practically drew themselves during the 1980s as officials in several jurisdictions proposed "education bankruptcy" procedures empowering the state to intervene in the management of local school systems that produce poor results. Nine states have put such laws on their books, usually after fierce legislative tussles. In 1988, in the most dramatic exercise of this form of accountability, the state of New Jersey dismissed the Jersey City school board and superintendent and stepped in temporarily to manage that troubled urban system. We cannot be certain that state education agencies, themselves often sluggish and bureaucratized, will do a better job—though in situations like that in Jersey City it is hard to imagine them doing worse. The point, rather, is that local educators (and board members) now understand that they are no longer accountable only to



Resistance to reforms like competence tests cost teachers and their unions public respect.

themselves and their Creator.

7. *Business and university partnerships.* In 1988, the U.S. Department of Education tallied 140,000 school-business partnership projects in operation, typically consisting of corporations donating or loaning resources, both human and material, to the schools. As businessmen came to see more clearly by decade's end that their generosity induced gratitude but little real improvement in student learning, some of them inclined toward more direct action in the realm of politics and policy—and we also began to spot signs of a backlash among educators who welcomed corporate largesse but not "interference."

8. *School restructuring.* By 1990, the term "restructuring" was as widely (and variously) used as "excellence" had been a few years earlier. It came in a hundred varieties: school-based management, teacher empowerment, learner-centered pedagogy, and so on. All, however, entail reallocating roles and responsibilities within individual schools and systems. The theoretical foundation of school restructuring (insofar as something this amorphous can be said to have one) closely resembles principles advocated by corporate management specialists. Typical strategies include devolution to the building level of decisions about resource allocation, scheduling, and other matters, and more collegial relationships among staff members.

Educational "perestroika" is notable because it has been the reform favored by change-minded educators themselves, the only one indigenous to their profession (even if key elements were borrowed from other fields), and the one entailing the least lay initiative and leadership.

9. *Making More Schools "Effective."* Even before the excellence movement gained momentum, scholars such as Ronald Edmonds, Michael Rutter, Marshall Smith, and Stewart Purkey had sought to answer the question of why some schools are more successful than others at imparting cognitive skills and knowledge to their students. While they found no patented formulas, they did spotlight some features commonly encountered in strong schools. These include a clear sense of institutional mission that is shared by teachers and principal; high expectations for all students; a well-developed team spirit in the school; a safe and orderly atmosphere congenial to learning; and adroit leadership of the instructional process, ordinarily by a principal who views himself as an educational executive rather than a building manager.

The research was solid and persuasive, at least with regard to elementary schools. It hewed to experience as well as common sense. And it provided a tempting agenda for reformers. There was only one big problem: The attributes that distinguish the very best schools tend to be home-grown, idiosyncratic, defiant of bureaucracy, and generally immune to efforts to mandate them into existence. Laws and regulations enacted far away cannot substitute for—nor themselves create—the commitment and shared values that must be embodied in the soul of the school itself. Nor can they guarantee the presence of extraordinary people in every school. If the principal is weak, if teachers work in virtual isolation from one another, if there is fundamental disagreement among the professional staff over goals and expectations, and if teachers and students stumble over each other racing for the door at 2:45 every afternoon, then that school is not likely to become more effective merely because state or local officials order it to change.

Yet tailoring such reforms to thousands of individual situations is too daunting an undertaking for even the most intrepid public officials. The result was a series of programs designed to put certain pieces of the "effective schools" research into com-

IS MEDIOCRITY THE AMERICAN WAY?

In Begin Here: The Forgotten Conditions of Teaching and Learning *(1991), cultural historian Jacques Barzun questions whether Americans are truly committed to the pursuit of excellence.*

Forget Education. Education is a result, a slow growth, and hard to judge. Let us talk rather about Teaching and Learning, a joint activity that can be provided for, though as a nation we have lost the knack of it. The blame falls on the public schools . . . but they deserve only half the blame. The other half belongs to the people at large, *us*—our attitudes, our choices, our thought-clichés.

Take one familiar fact: everybody keeps calling for Excellence—excellence not just in schooling, throughout society. But as soon as somebody or something stands out as Excellent, the other shout goes up: "Elitism!" And whatever produced that thing, whoever praises that result, is promptly put down. "Standing out" is undemocratic . . . .

Why should children make an effort to shine in school when shining is a handicap? Shining, that is, in school*work*. In athletics, it's another story. We do not cheer the duffers; there is no cry of elitism near the playing field. We pay large sums to get the best and to see that it is duly praised. Never mind what the school superintendent is like, we need a first-class coach and a good band. The people who insist on all this and supervise it very efficiently are those ultimately in charge of the schools, the school-boards, and behind them are the general public who want to enjoy exciting games and have their town excel . . . .

Given the public's muddled feelings about brainwork (which is what "excellence" refers to) and the parental indifference up to now about what their children are being taught, the school has a double fight on its hands: against ignorance inside the walls and against cultural prejudice outside, the prejudice lying so deep that those who harbor it do not even know they do. It none the less tells the young what is really important. The result for them is that learning, homework, teachers, tests, grades, standards, promotion form a great maze—mostly make-believe—that they have to stumble through in order to be let go at last and, thanks to a piece of paper, get a job.

mon practice. One example is the proliferation of "principals' academies" and "leadership institutes" designed to turn school principals into dynamic executives, in part by acquainting them with pertinent research findings. This is a sound plan so far as it goes. But there are about 83,000 public- (and 27,000 private-) school principals in the country, many of them rather set in their ways. And even when such projects have an immediate effect on participants, in terms of overall school effectiveness it is like supplying a single ingredient in a complex recipe. The frustration for reformers trying to turn effective schools research into policy and practice is that the recipe it yields is the sort that starts by saying, "First, you engage the services of a great chef, and then you renovate your kitchen." What policymakers want is something more like a muffin mix.

10. *Parent choice.* Empowering parents to select their child's school is an education improvement strategy in three ways: first, because proponents believe that youngsters learn more when enrolled in schools that they want to attend and that parents have some stake in; second, because we assume that individuals given the opportunity will flee bad learning environments and gravitate to better ones; and, third, because accountability through the "marketplace" is believed to have a salubrious effect on schools themselves. Good schools are rewarded with more students, esteem, and resources, while unpopular schools have potent incentives to change so as to attract more customers.

Counterarguments have been made to each of these claims, but during the 1980s the provision of choice within public education emerged as a significant school re-

School's out for summer! And kids aren't the only ones who rejoice. Extending the school year is an obvious way to increase learning, but parents have rebelled against such reforms.

form strategy. It appealed to some liberals because it offered poor and minority youngsters a route out of inferior, racially homogeneous inner-city schools—and perhaps a roundabout means of improving those schools as well. Many conservatives were drawn to its marketplace features and to its affirmation of parental primacy. Elected officials liked it because it was bold and sweeping, hugely popular (at least in concept) with the public, and able to be inaugurated with the stroke of a pen. A number of scholars found ample basis in research for making schools more responsive to their customers. And some practitioners welcomed this approach, too, both as a means of quality improvement and because it is compatible with—some would say inseparable from—school restructuring. They reasoned that as a decentralized, building-managed education system begins to supply more varied and distinctive offerings, it is only right that youngsters and schools should be matched on the basis of their individual strengths and preferences.

By 1990, nine states had enacted laws providing, in effect, that children could attend public school anywhere in the state. In addition, magnet-school programs flourished in many cities and some suburbs. "Schools within schools" were appearing, as were "alternative" schools of many kinds. Some communities turned all of their schools into schools-of-choice. Academic specialty schools were operating, too, sometimes on a statewide basis, often for gifted students. Half a dozen states even established residential high schools for talented youngsters from throughout the state, some with a heavy emphasis on math and science.

With only the rarest exceptions, however, these options were confined to public institutions. Parents who chose private schools got no aid or succor from public policy. Indeed, it was the discovery that an array of choices might be provided *within* public education, and that these were attractive to disadvantaged and minority families as well as to the prosperous and white, that broke the constitutional and political logjam in which most discussions of educational choice had previously been stuck.

That, in any case, was the situation during the 1980s. By 1990, it appeared to be undergoing a dramatic change—an important instance of the radicalization of education reform. This spring, for example, in presenting his America 2000 education strategy, President Bush insisted that choice policies include private as well as public school alternatives.

But choice is not a magic bullet that will solve all of our problems. One thing that we desperately need is a crackerjack sys-

tem of information feedback and accountability to remedy Americans' woeful ignorance about academic performance in their schools. The fact is that we—and that includes teachers and school administrators—don't really know what kinds of results our schools are achieving. Largely because of gaps in our testing systems, we are suffering from a kind of national split personality: People seem on the one hand to acknowledge that we have a very serious national education problem but also seem on the other hand to be reasonably content with their *own* and their children's education, and with their local schools. Last year, only 23 percent of parents polled by the Gallup Organization gave the nation's schools an "A" or "B," but 48 percent gave their community's public schools such high grades, and a remarkable 72 percent gave them to the school their eldest child attended!

Surveys show that teachers, principals, and superintendents hold equally rosy views; so it should come as no surprise that American students do not have a very realistic understanding of their own academic performance. The latest international comparison shows that American 13-year-olds rank at or near the bottom in various categories of math and science performance, but at the top in assessments of their own abilities. An amazing 68 percent of the American teenagers surveyed agreed with the statement, "I am good at mathematics." By contrast, only 23 percent of South Korean youngsters, the top performers in this test, dared to think themselves so accomplished.

Assessments must be linked to goals. The United States needs a set of clear educational goals that we expect every young American to achieve by the threshold of adulthood. Those adopted for the year 2000 by President Bush and the nation's governors in the aftermath of their 1989 education summit in Charlottesville, Virginia are not perfect in anybody's eyes, but they will do.* A substantial core curriculum—perhaps a *national* core—seems an obvious complement to this approach. (And why not relate the term of compulsory school attendance to the achievement of minimum standards rather than merely an arbitrarily selected birthday?) National achievement tests to measure results and to allow realistic assessments of the performance of students, teachers, schools, and school districts are indispensable. And measurement must be accompanied by accountability: Good things must happen to teachers and schools when they succeed in meeting goals, less welcome things when they fail.

None of this is meant to imply that the nation's schools ought to march in lockstep. Far from it. Outside the core curriculum, there should be vast differences among schools, not only with regard to what is taught, but how, when, and under what circumstances it is taught. School-site management, rather than central administration, ought to be emphasized. In Chicago, for example, individual school governing councils, not the system's central administration, now have the power to hire and fire their principals. That is how the diversity and vitality discovered by the "effective schools" researchers can take root in more communities.

That kind of management, combined with choice and rigorous assessments of performance, ought to help stimulate more parental involvement. Who can dispute, in addition, the need for a longer school day and school year? Finally, the teachers and

*The six goals: 1) All children will start school ready to learn; 2) The high school graduation rate will increase to 90 percent; 3) Students leaving grades four, eight, and 12 will demonstrate competence in challenging subject matter including English, math, science, history, and geography; 4) U.S. students will be first in the world in science and math achievement; 5) Functional literacy for every adult American; 6) Every school will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning, free of drugs and violence.

principals of whom so much more will be asked deserve appropriate treatment. They should be sought in many quarters (not just in colleges of education), treated as professionals, and paid according to their skills, experience, and performance. They also need to be more involved in the development of curriculum and instructional materials. In the Asian schools I've visited, teachers work pretty much year-round (and teach large classes), but they teach only three or four hours a day and have time for class preparation, meetings with students, and other activities.

Some of the radical reforms that are needed to revive the schools have recently been put in place in scattered states and localities around the country. But they haven't yet been planted in many fields and they are not rooted very deeply. The roots of mediocrity, by contrast, run deep into our cultural subsoil. They have left us with entrenched institutional resistance to change and a pervasive reluctance to compare the performance of schools and students. That is what finally stymied the sincere and imaginative efforts of the last decade's excellence movement. Now we need to overhaul the whole system. The scattered efforts around the country give heart. The America 2000 strategy President Bush announced in April, with its voluntary national standards, achievement tests, and school "report cards," along with its encouragement of choice, is sure to speed the pace of change.

But the president cannot do it alone, even with a talented and energetic Secretary of Education. Education is a national problem, to be sure, but not one amenable to solution at the hands of the federal government—a distinction that few in Washington can comprehend. The decisions that matter are made by states and communities, by parents around their kitchen tables, by teachers in millions of classrooms, by principals in thousands of schools, and perhaps above all by colleges and employers whose admissions and hiring decisions create the incentives that do or do not move students to work hard in schools.

Setting American education right will require something akin to a populist revolt against the status quo. This is not a system likely to turn itself around. Too many internal forces tend toward stasis. But it responds to political pressure, to popular discontent, and sometimes to adroit leadership. Devising a strategy to move it off dead center, to press it toward the laudable national education goals set by the president and governors, and finally to become accountable for its performance, may well be the highest-stakes challenge facing the United States in the 1990s.

A TEACHER'S VIEW

by Patrick Welsh

On the front lawn of Alexandria, Virginia's T.C. Williams High School, where I have been teaching English for the past 20 years, there is a large sign from the U.S. Department of Education proclaiming us "one of the outstanding high schools in America." The sign has been there since 1984, when then-Secretary of Education Terrell Bell drove across the Potomac River to present us with one of the Reagan administration's first Excellence in Education awards.

Nine months earlier, Bell had issued the now famous *A Nation at Risk* report proclaiming that America was in big trouble because of its deteriorating schools. But on this day the Secretary was extolling T.C. Williams as an example to the nation. He praised it as a school that was able to "meet the needs of all its students" in spite of the diversity of its student body. We were one of 88 schools nationwide receiving the first excellence awards. Yet if the list had been cut to a mere 10, Bell assured us, "T.C. Williams would still be there."

"Meeting the needs of all our students" is the espoused goal not only of T.C. Williams but also of most public and private high schools across the country. The concept owes much of its popularity to former Harvard President James B. Conant's 1959 report, *The American High School Today.* Conant extolled the comprehensive high school "whose programs correspond to the educational needs of all youth in the community." Such an institution would have something for everyone. It would "meet the needs" of the budding young scientist and the promising dramatist. It would have vocational education for this kid and Latin for that one. And students would be grouped by ability, so that each was challenged on a proper level.

Certainly T.C. Williams has a lot of needs to meet. In our hallways the sons and daughters of the prominent and well-to-do brush shoulders with kids on welfare, and handsome young Afghan and Hispanic guys neck with blond-haired redneck girls. We offer hundreds of courses, from Heating and Air Conditioning Repair to Russian III and Organic Chemistry. Our extracurricular activities run the gamut from women's crew and basketball to Frisbee and a ski club. Yet the truth is that T.C. Williams, like most other American high schools, is nowhere near "meeting the educational needs of all youth in the community."

Why did Conant's sensible vision fail to become reality? One answer, I suspect, is that the America Conant wrote about vanished during the years after his report was published. It was swept away by demographic, cultural, economic, and technological changes that Conant did not foresee, and that American high schools and families are only beginning to recognize.

One of the major problems in discussing education reform is that everyone—from parents to politicians—considers himself an expert by virtue of having been to school. But many of the "experts" are caught in a time warp, imagining that schools today are just like schools when they were students, and that what would work in the 1940s or '50s will work today.

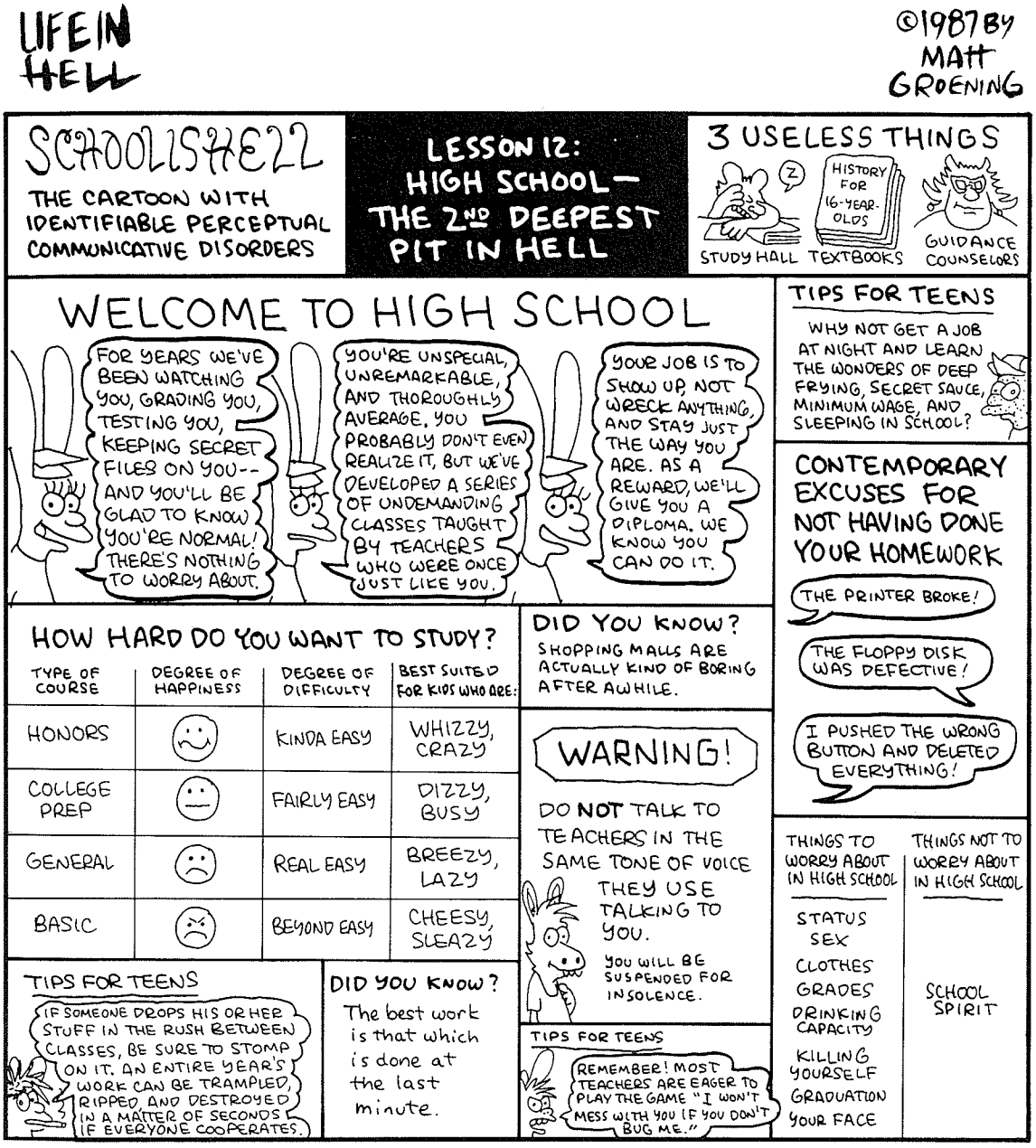
Even I who spend so much of my life with students have to remind myself constantly that the public school where I teach is not the small Catholic high school I attended decades ago.

When I came home in the afternoon from Notre Dame High School in Batavia, New York in the late 1950s, I'd practice my jump shot and do my homework. My mother was there and my neighbors kept an eye on me. My TV viewing consisted of the Wednesday night fights and an occasional Sid Caesar show. I didn't face pressure to try drugs or alcohol. But in the ensuing years the world I grew up in disappeared. TV and the electronic media began to rival and then to far exceed the influence of the classroom teacher. In 1960, surveys showed that parents, and teachers were the leading influence on 13- to 19-year-olds. By 1980, teachers had slipped to fourth place, behind peers, parents and media (TV, radio, and records). By then, a seductive, independent youth culture, with its own music, drugs, and sexual mores was challenging the traditional values of school and family. At the same time, as a result of economic pressures and the women's movement, mothers of even young children were being drawn out of the home and into the workplace by the millions. The family structure that I and most of today's education reformers grew up in during the 1940s and '50s was coming undone. In the 1950s, only four percent of all children were born into fatherless homes—two percent of white children and 18 percent of black children. Today, one-quarter of all children are born to single mothers—17 percent of white and 62 percent of black children. Almost 60 percent of all children born in the early 1980s will live with only one parent at some time before reaching the age of 18. These kids are bringing so much emotional baggage to school that they often seem to need psychologists, social workers, and counselors more than they need teachers.

In some ways, the unchanging routines of high school provide a sense of reassuring continuity. An American high school in the 1990s looks and feels pretty much like it did in the 1950s. The bell still rings every 50 minutes. The senior prom and the fortunes of the football team are still staples of school life. Every September, the new senior class officers promise that "this year is going to be different." And the difference usually comes down to the bigger and better hotel selected for the prom. The motivational posters in the classrooms of earnest young teachers say such things as "Today is the first day of the rest of your life" and "You can make a difference!"—just as they always did.

And yet these familiar images are misleading. In the 1990s, cheerleaders take the pill, the band does drugs, and the classroom has become peripheral in the lives of many of our "students." Nearly one out of two of them lives with only one natural parent; for the blacks among them it's closer to two out of three. T.C. Williams and other schools are doing more parenting on behalf of families than would have been imaginable a few decades ago. "We do a lot of mopping up here," says Jim McClure, T.C.'s director of guidance. "I see too many parents who want a quick fix for their kids. It's the fast-paced society we live in, with both parents often working and coming home exhausted. I can talk to a mother of a troubled kid in the morning and to the father in the afternoon, and you'd have no idea it was the same kid we are discussing. So many parents who are the picture of confidence and success when it comes to their

Patrick Welsh *teaches English at T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, Virginia. He frequently writes about education for the* Washington Post.



High school, viewed from the bottom up.

jobs are desperate when it comes to their own children."

Today, after-school jobs and weekend parties take precedence over education. In my day the fast girl was the one who put her hand on the back of your neck during slow dances. Kids are more precocious now. While many middle-class parents like to feel that teen sex is pretty much limited to the low-income minority kids who are having babies in record numbers, the fact is that middle- and upper-income teens are far more sexually active than their parents would care to know. "I could count the

number of virgins in my high school peer group on the fingers of both hands. And most of those were on a rampage to lose their virginity during senior year because they thought that being a virgin in college was unacceptable," says T.C. Williams valedictorian Jim Dawes, now at the University of Pennsylvania. Kyra Cook, a former student of mine now at the College of William and Mary, says that "In eighth grade, if a couple was sleeping together, it was big news. But it's no big deal in high school. If a couple is dating for a few months, everyone just assumes they are having sex. There's no stigma at all to it. Girls no longer try to hide it. In my class the majority of girls were sleeping with guys but only two or three had 'bad reputations' and they slept with everyone."

The Alan Guttmacher Institute reported recently that the proportion of sexually active women ages 15–17 is 18 percent higher than it was in 1982, with most of the increase occurring among white teenagers and those in high-income families. Seventy percent of young people 19 and under are said to be sexually active.

There is the same parental naiveté about teen use of alcohol and other drugs as there is about teen sex. "It's especially hard to convince parents of their kids' alcohol or drug abuse when the kids are academically and socially successful. 'What the hell are you talking about! How could he have a problem?' is the usual response when you confront parents with excessive use, even dependency," says Richard Ryan, who runs nationwide drug education programs based in Boston and Colorado. Jen Cheavens, who just graduated from West Springfield High School in Fairfax County, Virginia, confirms Ryan's view. "As long as you are doing well in school, hanging around the right friends and appearing to have things in control, many parents don't ask questions about what you do on the weekends," says Cheavens. I've had kids in my honors classes apologize for turning in papers that were rendered incoherent by months of steady abuse of alcohol and other drugs.

All these changes have affected the ability of schools and teachers to do their jobs. Members of our experienced science department attest to a decline in the willingness of the majority of students to do homework on a nightly basis or to put in the consistent effort that science has always required. The science department has been viewed as "unreasonably tough," but science teachers insist that they are really demanding less than they were 15 years ago. "Let's face it, there is not an academic work ethic in this country," says Anthea Maton, a British physics teacher with the National Science Teachers Association who travels around the country training physics teachers. "In America, kids are told that school should be fun. School should be their job. But cars, nice clothes, and sports come first."

No one sees the reluctance of American students to work hard more clearly than the foreign-born kids in our high schools. Hoang-An Nguyen came to this country with other Vietnamese refugees in 1981. He ran circles around his American friends in the classroom—even in English courses—and was a semifinalist in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search. Says Nguyen: "Many American students are lazy and wasteful. They have so many opportunities and just don't seem to care. They say Orientals are smarter but that is not so. We just spend more time working at our studies. I want to pay back my family for all they have done for me." Edgar Campos came from El Salvador five years ago speaking no English. By the time he was in my senior English class he was reading Faulkner and Shakespeare with

more understanding than most of his American classmates. Now an engineering student at Cornell University, Campos says that "many Americans whine and complain about their grades but aren't willing to do the work to get the grades. They are too comfortable with their money and cars. They seem to feel that they are going to get success without work."

If American schools really have deteriorated as much as the "experts" say they have, how can kids like Campos and Nguyen come to them knowing hardly any English and flourish academically? The fact is the system works for kids who come from families with a strong work ethic.

Lara Miles, now a sophomore at the University of Virginia, remembers many kids just "blowing off high school. They think that because their parents have it made that their lives are set for them."

Some of my students seem to be looking for the same stimulation and entertainment in class that they find in television. As one of them remarked, "Young people have a TV attitude toward school, like it is there to give you a good program and all you have to do is watch, complain, and turn the channel now and then." Kids talk in class, another girl explained to me, the way they talk at home during a TV commercial, ignoring the teacher as if he or she had no more feelings than a Sony Trinitron.

As an English teacher it is particularly disturbing to see fewer and fewer of even the brightest students reading, except when a grade is involved. The new term for these nonreaders is "aliterate." There was a time when many young people would curl up with a good book when they were bored. Today, they are more likely to rent a movie at a video store, or turn on their Nintendo or Sega home video games, or simply pick up the remote control of their TV and "slum around" its dozens of cable channels until they find something that distracts them. This past spring I had kids sneak their pocket-sized Nintendo video games into class; others were wired with special Walkmans that are very hard to detect. Several girls told me that before they leave for school in the morning they set their VCRs to record the soaps from 12:30 to 4:00. Said one: "When I get home from my after-school job around five, I go to my room and start watching my regular programs like 'Laverne and Shirley.' I'll grab a quick dinner and then pick up my night shows like 'Cosby' until about 9:30. Then comes the best part. I turn on the VCR and get caught up in my soaps. At about midnight I fall asleep." Stories like that, chilling though they are to a teacher, are not uncommon, especially with low-income kids who are already behind in their skills.

At the same time that television, the youth culture, and other social and economic forces were changing the world of young people, schools were experiencing the impact of two momentous occurrences in American society. One was the largest influx of immigrants since the 19th century; the other was school desegregation. When Conant wrote his report, the student bodies of most American high schools were fairly homogeneous. Nowadays, as a result of busing, the breakdown of old discriminatory housing patterns, and liberal immigration policies, high schools made up predominantly of a single racial or ethnic group are becoming the exception. T.C. Williams is typical of thousands of American high schools struggling to educate increasingly diverse student bodies. At present our student body is 42 percent black, 37 percent white, and 21 percent foreign-born. When students pour off the buses in the morning we look like an ideal of integration. But once the bells ring, kids go off to classes that often look as if they were selected on the basis of race and so-

cial status. Honors and advanced placement courses are full of white middle-class kids, with a sprinkling of blacks and Orientals. Many call these classes our private-school-within-a-public-school. They are supposed to be for the brightest and most motivated students, and certainly those types are there. But those classes also have a good number of lazy, burned-out kids whose affluent parents insisted they be placed in honors courses. On the other end, remedial and vocational courses are mostly filled with low-income blacks and recently arrived foreign students.

Black activists in the community see these programs as a racist remnant of segregation. Many whites say that they are only an attempt save the schools from lowering academic standards and facing the "white flight" that would inevitably follow. Presented with the conflicting priorities of retaining white middle-class loyalties while desegregating, schools evolved a system of sorting in which the bright were separated from the average and the average from the slow early in their education.

What we see in my school—and I believe in most schools—is a rigid system of class stratification. In previous generations, schools were the great equalizers, as education helped the poor rise in social and economic standing. This was especially true of the children of immigrants in the early part of the century. My grandfather came here as a 16-year-old, illiterate Irish farm worker. His lack of education and money did not prevent his son, my father, from graduating from Georgetown Medical School. Today, if a child is born into the kind of poverty my dad was, chances are far slimmer that our schools will help him rise out of it. A number of the kids in our school who grew up in the dire poverty of the public housing projects have ended up selling drugs; some have lost their lives in the process. Most of these young men are not drug users; they are entrepreneurs who saw selling drugs as a way out of the poverty they knew all their lives. Twelve years of education—including vocational courses in our state-of-the-art career wing—failed to give them the skills or the hope they needed to change their lives.

The story of several 17-year-olds I talked to while they were being held in the Alexandria jail as adults sounded all too familiar. "For me it was just being out there, the fame and the glory. I still had a vision of going legitimate and setting myself up in a career, but when you are in the game for a while, the money becomes an addiction and you can't give it up. You make $150 a week at Roy Rogers, but $150 a minute on the street," said one young man who professed to making several thousand dollars a week in the drug trade.

"When you see a friend grow—bust out and buy a new car—you just want to do it. I always had this feeling of missing something: I got desperate to have cars, clothes, and guns," said another who was recently sentenced to 20 years.

Far sadder than the small group of young men who are selling drugs are the many honest kids from poor homes whom the schools have not reached. By the time many of these kids get to high school they are woefully behind their middle-class peers in reading and math skills. "Nobody wants to say it, but everyone knows that these kids are just marking time here, hanging around till they get their meaningless diploma," says Otha Myers, a black counselor who has worked in the Alexandria and Fairfax County schools.

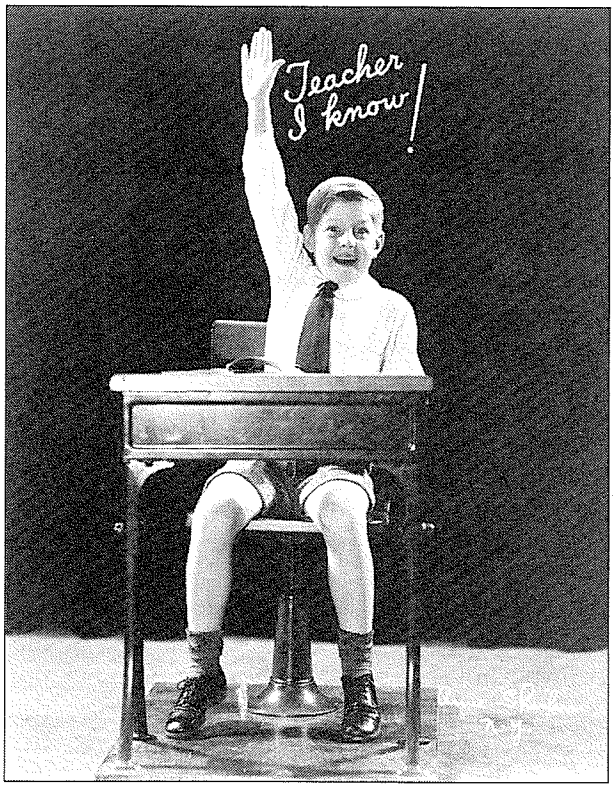
Vocational-education instructors themselves are not all that happy with the situation. They complain that many of their students don't have the basic skills for success in voc. ed. any more than in English or math. "We've become a dumping ground," says one voc. ed. teacher. "Students with low verbal and math ability simply cannot

grasp the concepts or master the skills necessary for this type of work," says Charlie Adams, who teaches auto mechanics. Like other teachers, those in voc. ed. have trouble reaching and motivating kids who lack basic skills and a desire to learn.

But educators don't like to talk much about the kids in voc. ed. Our failure with so many of them makes us feel guilty, and they are certainly not the kind of public relations material that is going to help us in our competition with private schools. We'd rather talk about the kids in our honors and advanced placement courses. On the surface, it looks like we are meeting the needs of these kids. Every year we brandish our National Merit Scholarships, Ivy League acceptances, and science prizes to convince anxious middle-class parents that their children can get as good an education at the local public high school as at the expensive, mostly white, private schools. The word in the community is that T.C. Williams is an excellent place for the bright, motivated student. Few private schools can match our well-equipped science laboratories, our array of college-level advanced placement courses, or our extensive sports and extracurricular programs. This past year when six of our seniors got into Princeton and large numbers were accepted at other highly selective colleges and universities, there was a lot of dismay among local parents who had chosen to send their kids to expensive private schools but didn't see the same results.

Still, even among the brightest and most accomplished students, there is a lot to be desired. In the last 10 years there has been an ever growing hysteria among these kids and their parents about grades and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. It's as if high school has become nothing more than an arena in which to build résumés for the next step—college. And not just any college but the most prestigious. Canon Charles Martin, former headmaster of the prestigious St. Alban's School in Washington, D.C., used to gather parents in the school chapel to convince them that their sons' success and happiness in life did not hinge on acceptance to one of New England's ivied nirvanas. "We are not preparing your boys for the kingdom of Harvard or the kingdom of Yale, but for the kingdom of God," Martin would say, often to no avail. He recalls that there wasn't much need for his speech until recent decades.

"We have kids and parents frantic about



The ideal student of yore seems more anachronistic with every passing year. He knew nothing (or little) of television, MTV, video games, alcohol, drugs, or sex.

college," says John Keating, director of guidance at prestigious Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland, another suburb of Washington. "Many parents have more riding on the letter of acceptance than the child has. It's gotten to be some kind of merit badge or medal—a test of their genes or the job they have done as parents."

"Some of the independent schools are cauldrons," says Fred Wetzel of the New England office of the College Board. They are not healthy places to work or study. They have the most volatile elements: affluent kids of widely varying ability and pushy parents who have paid all this money so their kids are entitled to get into the best colleges," says Wetzel.

Kids seem so worried about building résumés for college that they have little time to think about what they want to do with their lives once college is over. "In high school, we were told that college was the next step, the place where we would get focused and our careers would find us," says University of Virginia junior Theresa Kennedy. "Then when you don't find out in college you go on to grad school and spend another couple years to find out what you are supposed to be doing. There are a lot of people just walking around the campus aimlessly. It's hard not having any finish line, any goal to work for. In high school you worked for grades to get into college. In college, if you don't have anything planned out there is no motivating force," says Kennedy.

"Not too many college students are in a rush to get into the working world," says Brown University junior Jennifer Seltz. "College is this cushy life where you go to class a few hours a day and then spend the rest of the time hanging out with your friends. It's this luxurious period that allows you to be completely self-centered. All you have to worry about is your next paper or your next little activist stance. There are awareness weeks for everything from Body Image to Classism," says Seltz, who during one semester last year had a total of 10 hours and 40 minutes of class time per week. On Monday her first and only class went from 11:00 a.m. to noon. Her only class on Thursdays was from 1:00 to 2:20 p.m. "If you put all the class time and study time together," she says, "you'd barely come up with a 40-hour week—except for those in engineering or science."

I don't want to paint too bleak a picture of today's high schools. Yes, a lot of our better students are more into résumé-building than learning for learning's sake. But many of them are also taking more challenging courses than their successful parents ever dreamed of taking in high school—courses like Russian, physics with calculus, and organic chemistry. When we look at the plight of many of our low-income minority kids, we must remember that many of them are the first in their family to graduate high school, and others are the first to go on to college. The effects of centuries of poverty and discrimination cannot be eradicated in a few decades.

But before we start talking about reforming schools, we would do well to remember what sociologist Christopher Jencks said 18 years ago in his controversial book *Inequality: A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America.* Jencks came to the surprising (and still much disputed) conclusion that schools actually have rather little impact on the IQ or the later occupational status, job satisfaction, or economic position of their students. If all high schools were equally effective, Jencks concluded, the academic inequalities among 12th graders would not change much, and disparities in their subsequent attainment would change less than one percent. Family background, condi-

tions in the home, the neighborhood, genetic attributes, and other factors all seemed to Jencks to be more important in determining what happened to individuals in life than schooling.

Jencks's conclusions outraged many, but like it or not, his theories seem to be borne out by American education. Most schools are no better or worse in terms of academic results than the students they serve. Year after year, high schools like New Trier in Winnetka, Illinois, Stuyvesant in New York City, and Walt Whitman in Bethesda turn out a large number of National Merit Scholars and garner many Ivy League acceptances. Everybody talks about how good these schools are. But, of course, what is really perceived as good about them has more to do with the abilities of their students, children, for the most part, of intelligent, highly educated parents. Three years ago my own school had the highest number of National Merit Scholars of any high school, public or private, in the state of Virginia. And we got all the publicity we could out of those students. But graduating with them that year also were a few hundred kids—mostly black and poor, and many of them already parents themselves—who read several years below grade level and whom 12 years of schooling had barely reached.

My own school tried almost every "reform" measure that came along in the 1980s: peer coaching, teacher empowerment, strategic planning, curriculum mapping, and minority achievement among them. Like those on the national level, none of the reforms at my school have had a real effect on student performance. The kids who do well, whether they be rich or poor, have one thing in common: parents or some other adult in their lives who have put a premium on education and have pushed them.

I am not saying that everything depends on the home environment and that we should forget about reforming schools. But some of the major reforms being proposed seem to me terribly misguided. Take parental choice, a favorite of U.S. Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander. Proponents of choice seem to be forgetting that the biggest problems in our schools are those kids who have no advocates at home, whose parents do not care or are not tuned into how schools work. As I see it, choice will mean that parents in the know will move their kids into what they see as the better schools, while the kids whose parents are not active will be left behind in schools that—bereft of the kind of parents that demand quality—will deteriorate.

And as Philip Schlechty, president of the Center for Leadership in School Reform points out, "Anyone who believes that some parents will not exercise choice on grounds other than those that have to do with high quality democratic education misunderstands why the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision was necessary in the first place. Anyone who believes that academic quality is the basis of choice in all or nearly all instances does not understand the power of basketball and football in the life of schools and communities."

The fact is that we already have choice at work within most schools. Aggressive parents in the know see to it that their kids get the best teachers and the most stimulating courses—gifted and talented, advanced placement, or whatever the label. Administrators then fill the classes of the incompetent or marginal teachers they are afraid to get rid of with kids who have the least vocal parents, usually the children of the poor.

Of course some reforms can make some difference. One that has been tried but not tried enough is Headstart. Children living in poverty with single mothers come into

school so far behind their middle-class peers that most of them never catch up. Despite research showing that Headstart can make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged children, only 20 percent of those eligible nationwide are actually enrolled in programs. In the city of Alexandria, there are enough children for 12 centers, but only two centers are in operation. Ideally, we would be able to stop the soaring rate of out-of-wedlock births among impoverished teenage girls. But until we do, programs like Headstart must intervene to assure that the children born to such young women get the preparation for school that most middle-class kids come by naturally.

In the schools, cooperative learning, where students work in groups of four or five, not only stimulates kids to take ownership of their learning but helps people of various backgrounds get used to the kind of group problem-solving that is so important in the real world. School-based management can allow talented teachers and principals to address the unique needs of their own school without having to worry about officious central-office bureaucrats. Peer coaching can break up the deadly isolation in which most teachers work and allow them to share ideas and strategies for reaching kids. And the 535 new experimental schools that President Bush has proposed to create during the next five years as part of his America 2000 education strategy will be a giant step toward reinventing a school system that hasn't really changed that much since the turn of the century.

But even the most enlightened reforms will not make much of a difference until American education deals with the basic philosophical bind in which it is trapped—namely, how do we insist that everyone is entitled to a public education and still uphold the moral and academic standards that are essential if schools are going to work? The reformers talk a great deal about standards, but most high schools and colleges back off when it comes to the crunch. We are obsessed about the drop-out rate in our high schools but refuse to admit, in spite of mounting evidence everywhere, that the kick-out rate must go up if our schools are going to be serious institutions rather than "the place I go to be with my friends," as so many kids now see them.

In my own school, we have had "students" arrested on drug and weapons charges at night only to be allowed back in school the next morning. One fellow, an All-Metropolitan football star, made headlines for five arrests in the course of four months. He became so infamous that the Washington magazine *Regardie's* sponsored a contest awarding a dinner for two to the person who could correctly predict the date of his next encounter with the police. After each arrest—several of them drug related—he was back at school, a hero to many of his peers.

But the real criminals aren't as big a problem as the just plain disruptive kids, usually from totally dysfunctional families. These kids often make teaching impossible. They poison the atmosphere and frustrate their classmates and teachers. Principals and other administrators walk the halls with walkie-talkies, acting more like cops or wardens than educators. It's time to let high schools be for learning, and let some other public institution be responsible for warehousing chronically disruptive kids.

There must not only be higher standards of conduct—off and on the high school campus—but higher academic standards. Yet high schools alone cannot accomplish this. Columnist Robert Samuelson, writing in the *Washington Post* last year, put the problem very clearly. "College leaders see themselves as the victims of poor high schools. This rationalization is at least half backward," wrote Samuelson. "Lax high school and college academic

standards feed on each other. In our society, the badge of successfully completing high school is not just a degree but the ability to go to college—and almost anyone can go to college."

In the last 10 years I have been amazed to see the kinds of students that colleges have been accepting. Affluent white kids who have been kicked out of several private schools before landing in my school, who barely have a C average, and who have been addicted to alcohol and other drugs have been getting into what I once thought were respectable schools. Minority kids who are barely literate have been waltzing into "higher" education. And then there are the just plain lazy kids who have drifted through high school. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that if you are medically alive and your parents write a check, you can get into college today. And the point is the kids know it. They see their do-nothing older buddies getting in and they realize that they don't have to work. University of Chicago freshman Sarah Drucker put it this way: "There might be better ways to teach, but that is not the real problem. I've had so many good teachers. I hear kids saying, 'All my teachers suck—that's why I'm not getting A's.' They are just making excuses for not working. It's our culture—the American way—not to push yourself if it is not going to have some immediate reward. Most kids don't care if they learn as long as they get the A's and get into name schools."

"Adolescents are like adults," writes Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers. "They do as much as they have to in order to get what they want. The young people who want to go to elite schools must meet high standards, and they work hard. But the rest of high school students know they can get into some college no matter how poorly they do."

Because so many colleges today are concerned with survival, they "subtly lower academic standards to ensure the flow of students," continues Robert Samuelson. He suggests that "states could shut down 10 to 20 percent of their colleges and universities, so schools wouldn't have to continually scrounge for students. States could also sharply raise their tuition and couple the increases with big boosts in scholarships. But to keep scholarships, students would have to keep a C average."

Samuelson's ideas aren't going to make college bureaucrats happy. But he is right on the mark when he says that these measures "would instantly improve high schools." Instead of adopting such procedures, however, "we prefer to maintain poor schools—high schools and colleges—that everyone can attend, rather than have good schools that might benefit most students. We prefer to complain about 'underinvestment' in education rather than face the harder question of why our massive investment in education produces such poor results . . . . No matter how worthy, 'reforms' can't succeed unless students work harder."

And making students work harder won't cost any money!

WHY THE SCHOOLS STILL DON'T WORK

For all the nation's earnest intentions and policy gyrations during the last decade, the United States has barely budged out of its deep scholastic hole.

Just wait, the optimists say. Wait for standardized tests to reflect reforms already in place. Or wait for new reforms. Or wait for Washington and the rest of the country to get really serious (i.e. to pile even more billions upon the billions already added to American education). To which remarkably few skeptics respond: What makes anyone believe that things will improve much any time soon, no matter how much more money we spend or how many ways we manipulate school policy? What makes anyone believe, for example, that learning will improve much as long as so many children grow up in fatherless households, or as long as so many Americans have such a weak understanding of the tie between hard work and scholastic success?

Some of the most sobering evidence is often delivered inadvertently by the optimists. Lisbeth B. Schorr, in **Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage and Despair** (Doubleday, 1988), refers to broader social policy, not just education, when she writes that help for children growing up in persistent poverty "may be ineffective as provided by prevailing, rigidly circumscribed programs. But where programs are especially attuned to the distinct needs of high-risk families, these children are being helped from the outside."

She is right—relatively good programs are possible, but their rarity is no accident. The programs she discusses, aimed at reducing teenage pregnancies and other problems, do well only when they are "intensive, comprehensive, and flexible." Their "climate" also must be shaped by "skilled, committed professionals who establish respectful and trusting relationships and respond to the individual needs of those they serve." The problem is, as she concedes, that these clash with the "traditional requirements of professionalism and bureaucracy." Meaning, large organizations—especially public ones—can't make these programs work.

But even "successful" reforms usually fall short. Recall, for example, one of the most heralded education triumphs of the 1970s and '80s, the remarkable rise in reading scores in East Harlem's District No. 4. Led by deputy superintendent Sy Fliegel, teachers created more than a score of alternative schools, employing a variety of curricular and pedagogical approaches, and allowed parents to choose where to send their children. It was a great achievement, and Fliegel describes it well in **Public Schools By Choice**, edited by Joe Nathan (Meyer Stone Books, 1989). But is a reform that lifts a district only to the middle of the pack in a disastrous school system really that heartening?

Stewart C. Purkey and Marshall S. Smith make the essential point in "Effective Schools: A Review," in the *Elementary School Journal* (March 1983). They write: "An unusually 'effective' school serving predominantly low-income and minority students may actually have considerably lower achievement than a middle-class white suburban school." Two reasons, they say, are the "pervasive influences of social class on achievement and the possibility that even the 'typical' suburban school has some significant and important advantages over the relatively effective inner-city school." And, lest we forget, even most "good" suburban schools produce mediocre results.

American schools are perfect reflections of American dilemmas and disasters. (For lucid histories, see Diane Ravitch's **Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945-80** [Basic, 1983]; and Lawrence A. Cremin's **American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980** [Harper, 1988]) Yet, rarely is educational policy more delusional than when it comes to questions of equality and race—and poverty and fatherless families. Left and Right routinely accuse each other of racist and racialist sins, with both sides overstating the power of secular institutions such as public schools to compensate for the influence of social class,

and to overcome problems that are deeply cultural, behavioral and, in a real sense, spiritual.

There is, for example, much talk about the "feminization of poverty," a problem that sounds like it might be amenable to a checkbook cure. But in an absolutely on-target literature review, "Life Without Father: America's Greatest Social Catastrophe" in *Policy Review*, (Winter 1990), Nicholas Davidson writes: "[P]overty is probably the least destructive aspect of father absence. More serious and longer-lasting, both for the individual and society as a whole, is the role of father absence in producing educational and cognitive deficits, mental illness, drug use, and crime." One example Davidson cites is a 1968 study which compared American College Entrance Examination scores of 295 students from homes without fathers with those of 760 students from two-parent families. The absence of a father had a "dramatic" negative effect on scores, which could not be explained by differences in income. A better term for what afflicts these youngsters is philosopher Michael Novak's: the "masculinization of irresponsibility."

The education debate often excludes the important and dwells on that which is less so. Like money. "There is no strong or systematic relationship between school expenditures and student performance," writes the University of Rochester's Eric A. Hanushek in a review of decades of research, "The Impact of Differential Expenditures on School Performance" in *Educational Researcher* (May 1989).

How often do educational and political leaders face the paralyzing fact that black children frequently do poorly in school because they fear "acting white," as Signithia Fordham and John U. Ogbu argued in "Black Students' School Success: Coping with the "Burden of 'Acting White'"" in the *Urban Review* (Vol. 18, No. 3)? Who faces up to the work of psychologist Harold Stevenson of the University of Michigan, who finds that many Americans just don't have the attitudes needed for educational progress? In studies such as **Contexts of Achievement: A Study of American, Chinese, and Japanese Children** (Society of Child Development, 1990), with Shin-ying Lee, et al., Japanese and Chinese mothers (the latter in Taiwan) stress the "importance of hard work to a greater degree than American mothers," who tend to believe that innate ability largely determines academic success. As a result, American parents tend not to encourage their children to do homework, attend after-school classes, and seek out tutoring. In turn, even the best American students and schools tend to perform no better than their weakest Asian counterparts. But never mind. President Bush and the nation's governors have vowed that American kids will lead the world in math and science only nine years from now.

Still, it is true that several of the most influential studies of the last decade provide some grounds for optimism. Nothing necessarily prevents public schools from stressing curricular basics, holding students to high standards, maintaining discipline, or working closely with parents—the factors that sociologist James Coleman cites in **High School Achievement: Public, Catholic, and Private Schools Compared** (Basic, 1982) to explain the superiority of Catholic and private schools. Likewise, in the most important education book of 1990, **Politics, Markets, and American Schools** (Brookings, 1990), choice advocates John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe argue persuasively that schools can improve—if and only if they are shaped and governed by market, not political forces. And in this year's most important book, **We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future** (Free Press, 1991), Chester E. Finn, Jr., holds out hope that the curricular and pedagogical flaccidity he has so cogently criticized for a decade can be countered.

But even when these three sagacious works are piled high atop all that is sugary and ordinary, a central burden of proof remains on the optimists. We have yet to demonstrate that real school reform—not just political and bureaucratic reshuffling, but cultural change—is in us as a nation.

—Mitchell B. Pearlstein

Mitchell B. Pearlstein *is president of Center of the American Experiment, a public policy and educational institution in Minneapolis. He formerly served in the U.S. Department of Education, and holds a Ph.D. in educational administration from the University of Minnesota.*

CURRENT BOOKS

SCHOLARS' CHOICE

Me-First Politics

WHY AMERICANS HATE POLITICS. *By E. J. Dionne, Jr. Simon & Schuster. 430 pp. $22.95*

THE UNITED STATES OF AMBITION: Politicians, Power and the Pursuit of Office. *By Alan Ehrenhalt. Times Books. 309 pp. $23*

American politics today is in a mess. Elections appear to be held in the interests of candidates, and political parties seem largely irrelevant to many voters. The Democrats have all but disappeared as a credible force in presidential elections, while they continue to outnumber Republicans in Congress, state legislatures, and in most other elected offices. For the first time in American history, divided government has become the normal state of affairs. And divided government matters: It produces a politics of collision (the epic 1990 budget battle, for example), collusion (the multibillion-dollar savings-and-loan fiasco), and general evasion of responsibility (the bipartisan commission to resolve the 1984 social-security funding crisis).

Nor is that all. Over the past generation, the political nation has broken up into ideologically polarized interest groups—again to a degree without parallel in earlier times. By 1980, Ronald Reagan could run effectively against unpopular liberal interest groups, claiming instead to speak for a general national interest. George Bush won in 1988 by linking his Democratic opponent with every unpopular interest group in sight. Meanwhile, very serious problems were left to fester amid all the position-taking, finger-pointing, and blame-avoiding. Should we be surprised that public disgust with politics has now reached historic heights?

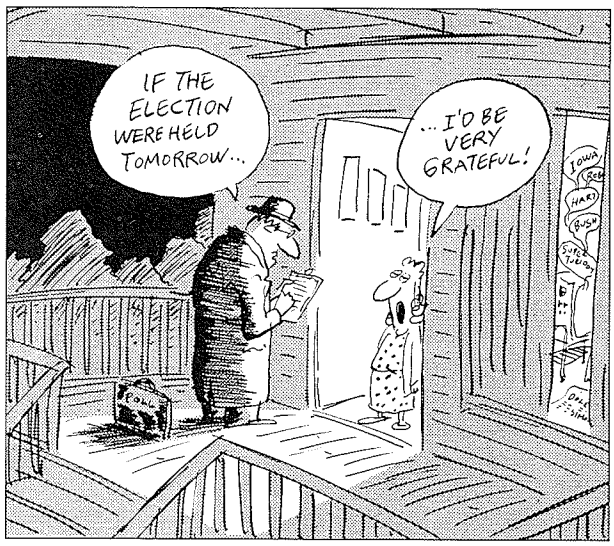
This political pathology has been analyzed in a spate of books both journalistic and academic. Two journalists in particular, E. J. Dionne, Jr., of the *Washington Post*, and Alan Ehrenhalt, the editor of *Governing*, offer complementary and convincing treatments of what is really one political problem.

In *Why Americans Hate Politics*, Dionne traces the history of presidential politics from the 1960s through the 1980s, which in reality is the history of the fall and rise of a set of political ideas. Dionne's subject is the disintegration of a once-dominant liberalism and the subsequent rise and rapid exhaustion of its conservative successor. His approach synthesizes much recent research and analysis, from Austin Ranney's *Curing the Mischiefs of Faction* (1974) to Jonathan Rieder's *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (1985). Dionne's book is what the French call, respectfully, *haute vulgarisation*: He speaks clearly and coherently to the general reader.

Liberalism was once the politics of what Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., called the "vital center." That center was held together in domestic policy by the New Deal and then Keynesian economics and by anticommunism in the world arena. It was, in short, Cold War liberalism. It flourished as long as the American economy flourished, and as long as the costs of worldwide imperial maintenance were not too high.

Dionne correlates the decline and fall of this liberalism to the general crisis that engulfed American politics during the late 1960s. The Vietnam War unleashed pressures that overwhelmed the old guard, thus making room for the entry of quite new groups onto center stage.

Nixon's overwhelming defeat of George McGovern in 1972 revealed that the Democrats' ideas, coalitions, and interest groups were in the most serious kind of political trouble. Dionne suggests that Nix-



on's refusal to disengage from Vietnam before 1973 was shrewdly calculated to drive deeper wedges between cold warriors and the antiwar forces within the Democratic opposition, thus ensuring the nomination of his weakest opponent. If so, it was an early and covert example of the new politics of divisiveness that, by 1988, the American Right had come to play with virtuoso skill in broad daylight. Meanwhile, the civil rights movement, with its affirmative-action quotas and forced busing, appeared to blue-collar whites as an effort by middle-class liberals and their black clients to create unfair advantages against them in life's struggle. The liberal "vital center" completely fell apart under that most ill-starred of presidents, Jimmy Carter. Near-runaway inflation sent the message across the country that the economy was out of control. Also in jeopardy, many voters thought, was America's once-commanding position in the world. The Iranian hostage crisis, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua were all cases in point.

Few ideas in politics ever become "hegemonic." When one set of ideas replaces another, the whole political order changes. This does not happen very often in a single human lifetime, and it has happened only six or so times since the Constitution went into effect two centuries ago. Modern conservatism, as Dionne makes clear, was born in reaction against the liberal hegemony. If a birthdate is required, William F. Buckley's launching of the *National Review* in 1955 will do. But conservatism then was rather like the mammals in the Age of Dinosaurs: small if shrill, and largely ignored by the giants who seemed to be running things. Yet with each division within the old liberal coalition, and with each failure to stay in control of fundamentals like the economy and world order, came a right-wing riposte. Cultural ideas once considered extremist or passé were repackaged and presented to the public: the supply-side economists' panacea of more revenue with lower tax rates; the religious Right's opposition to abortion; the defense intellectuals' attacks on the "little-Americanism" of the Democratic Left; the right-wing populists' critique of civil-rights policy. All these finally found a mass market.

As it enters the 1990s, this conservative coalition is encountering two serious problems, Dionne finds. First, its component groups live in very uneasy coalition with one another. Capitalist revitalizers and religio-cultural traditionalists, for example, have quite discordant agendas. Second, the initial impetus has come and gone with the Reagan Revolution. Conservatism, if not yet repudiated like its liberal counterpart, plainly is exhausted. American politics as a whole is thus left with neither vision nor leadership nor purpose. Instead, the political order has become as vacuous as it is nasty, as the 1988 presidential campaign showed.

Why Americans Hate Politics is essentially the story of the collapse of institutions, particularly the political parties, that once bound Americans together. Dionne concludes his book with an appeal for getting out of the ideological, interest-group trenches and for recreating some new moderate-pragmatic "vital center" in

American politics. These are noble sentiments, but one is reminded of an 18th-century recipe for hare stew: First catch your hare. The underlying causes of the fragmentation must somehow be addressed before the political consequences begin to dissipate, and no one knows how that might be accomplished. Moreover, when candidates achieve brilliant successes by exploiting the politics of divisiveness, what incentives can they have to do otherwise?

It is politicians and their incentives that Alan Ehrenhalt examines in *The United States of Ambition*, and it is the best treatment of this subject that I have ever read. "Who sent these people?" Ehrenhalt's first sentence asks. Once, as a rule, it was political party organizations that did the sending. Today, by contrast, the newer breed of politician is made up of *individual* entrepreneurs. They send themselves.

Ehrenhalt cites Connecticut as a state that was once nationally renowned for the power and cohesion of its party organizations. Things are very different there now. In January 1989, renegade Democrats joined with the GOP minority in the state House of Representatives to defeat a liberal Democratic Speaker and replace him with a more conservative Democrat. This would have been unthinkable not so many years ago; the central party organization would have imposed fatal sanctions on the rebels. One of the Democratic rebels in 1989 was Representative Shaun McNally, who made light of party sanctions:

> I've had people threaten from leadership positions that my bills would be killed, but most of them seem to get through. I've had people say they were going to line up a Democratic opponent for me, but they haven't had much success. What kind of patronage can it cost me? I don't even want patronage. That's not what I'm up here for.

Nearly a generation ago, a new breed of politicians like McNally began challenging the established leadership structure throughout America. The old organizations eventually crumbled. Getting along by going along, the old motto, was replaced by "doing your own thing."

Today a higher caliber of officeholder is elected than in the past. But these politicians' independence and individual entrepreneurship make coalitions chaotically fluid and institutional performance grossly inadequate. The equality, openness, and individualism which these politicians espouse are surely not unworthy values. But their dominance is incompatible with other, no-less-important values: leadership, discipline, and the organized pursuit of larger-than-personal goals and goods through political action. Private virtue can translate into public vice—an irony only equalled by that of the reformers who ousted party bosses merely to get a system more in need of reform than ever. "Why," Ehrenhalt asks, "is machine government a greater affront to democracy than a government of leaderless individualists prone to petty rivalry and endless bickering?"

Ehrenhalt, unlike Dionne, provides us with no answers. But his argument nonetheless has an important implication: One cannot make bricks without straw. Serious change is only possible if individual ambition is pursued in a way that yields competent government as a byproduct. But how do we change the context within which ambition is pursued? Indeed, how do we reorient politicians and political campaigns toward serious discussion of the country's future?

If the past is any guide, such change seems most unlikely in the near term, short of some catastrophe, particularly in the economy. Disasters concentrate the mind wonderfully. And the system which Dionne and Ehrenhalt describe will one day collapse, unbalanced by its growing deficit in both competence and popular legitimacy. Only if we naively suppose that history really has come to an end or that, being Americans, we are spared the fates that afflict lesser mortals, can we really believe otherwise.

The democratic way out requires, at the very least, the reconstruction of political parties in some form. But this reconstruction would require reversing ev-

ery trend that Dionne and Ehrenhalt have described—and this would mean a change as large as any in American history. There are also, of course, possibilities for a non-democratic political future: Watergate and Irangate have supplied the most spectacular trial runs so far. Certainly Dionne and Ehrenhalt have sounded the alarm that our democracy is not just undergoing reconstitution, but is, rather, in danger of moving into ever-deepening eclipse.

—Walter Dean Burnham holds the Frank C. Erwin, Jr., Centennial Chair in Government at the University of Texas.

But What Does Music Mean?

MUSIC SOUNDED OUT. *By Alfred Brendel. Farrar, Straus. 258 pp. $25*

MUSIC AS CULTURAL PRACTICE 1800–1900. *By Lawrence Kramer. Univ. of Calif. 241 pp. $24.95*

MUSIC AND THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION. *By Leo Treitler. Harvard. 352 pp. $35*

MUSIC AND DISCOURSE: Toward a Semiology of Music. *By Jean-Jacques Nattiez. Trans. by Carolyn Abbate. Princeton. 272 pp. $45*

Many years ago I did a stint as music critic for the *Irish Times* and, under a pseudonym, for the *Leader*, a small magazine in Dublin. In the *Irish Times* I reviewed concerts, two or three a week; in the *Leader* I filled a page with talk about the social and political considerations loosely related to music. Loosely, because my sense of the relations between music and society was rudimentary; I wrote the column without knowing what I was doing. Music was much in the air, however. I was a student of *lieder* at the Royal Irish Academy of Music, and it didn't seem more dubious to talk about music than about anything else. Besides, there were readable masters: Ernest Newman in the *Sunday Times*, Eric Blom in the *Observer*, Hans Keller in the *Listener*. If they could write music criticism, it didn't follow that I could, but that there was no principle against my writing it. Now I'm not so sure.

The analysis of music is a recent activity. The elucidation of a work of music used to be merely offered as a model for composition, an inventory of correct practice. But in the late 18th century, philosophers like Kant began attempting to establish a moral basis for values other than that of self-interest. To find such a basis, they turned to the example furnished by aesthetics. The analysis of music, as Leo Treitler remarks in *Music and the Historical Imagination*, thus began with "the contemplation of beauty for its own sake and without self-interest." The art of symphonic music, free of the distraction of words and references, made discussing the disinterestedness of aesthetic experience easier or at least more pointed. Words are always in a hurry to be completed by their meanings. Notes in sequences have nothing, or nothing very urgent, to say. Furthermore, if you emphasize the unity of a work of art, you find this unity more evident in music than, say, in literature. Whatever we mean by content, in music we never find it separable from form. That is why all art, as Walter Pater said in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), "constantly aspires toward the condition of music."

But, beyond that grand aspiration, what can one say about music? Clearly, a technical description of a piece of music is possible, if not necessarily widely appealing. In *Music Sounded Out*, Alfred Brendel has collected his technical studies of Schubert's last sonatas, Liszt's B minor sonata, Beethoven's Diabelli Variations, and many other works. About the opening of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 57 he asks us to note:

(1) A (broken) triad, (2) An octave (as octave leap or area or transposition of a phrase), (3) A second as appoggiatura or trill, most frequently in its simplest form of three notes, and in the degree of the dominant; (4) The area of a third, filled in by the combination of the simple trill (C-D-C) with the fast trill (D-E-D), and (5) note repetition.

"Formalism"—approaching a musical work as a technical whole—assumes "the beauty of a musical work is specifically musical: i.e. it inheres in the combinations of musical sounds and is independent of all alien, extramusical notions." The assertion comes from a famous essay by E. Hanslick on the beauty of music, published in 1854; it is quoted in Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Music and Discourse* to illustrate a Formalist axiom also practiced by Varèse, Stravinsky, and other composers. According to this emphasis, a work of music is an embodiment of formal and sequential possibilities discovered by a composer within the resources of music itself; in other words, a series of acoustic relations.

So much—or so little—is clear enough. But those who write music and those who listen to music often want to go further than Formalism allows and to evade what appears to be the aridity of a strictly formal analysis. They want to share meaning with the literary arts. Some composers attach titles to their works: Modest Petrovich Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874), Robert Schumann's *Kinderszenen* (1838), Edward Elgar's *Enigma Variations* (1899). Even when composers don't give their works such referential names, they move the works into the discourse of general experience by telling performers how to play them: not just indications of tempo (*andante*, *allegretto*, and so forth) but indications of mood, tone and style (*con amore*; *maestoso*). Harmless instructions, perhaps, but they show that composers aren't always content to reside in the solitude of forms and relation. Performers and listeners often express the same desire, as if they insisted on having music as a discursive art, not merely an intrinsic one. Reading these several books, I found myself wondering what justification a scholar of music has for correlating certain sequences of sounds with certain states or movements of soul. In *Human All-Too-Human* (1878), Nietzsche meditated on Beethoven's Ninth Symphony:

> The thinker feels himself floating above the earth in an astral dome, with the dream of immortality in his heart: All the stars seem to glimmer about him and the earth seems to sink ever further downward.

Brendel, strict in his Formalism as he generally is, permits himself to say of "*Kind im Einschlummern*," one of the *Kinderszenen*, that "it stops on a wonderful, true romantic A minor chord that opens like a mouth opened by sleep." *Opens*? *Like*? And he writes of Schubert's last sonatas:

> Besides the gentle and solemn, there is a disturbing and menacing side to Schubert's last music. Its classical poise is sometimes undermined by anxiety, exploded by nightmares or shaken by despair . . . . the episodes of the Adagios in the C minor Sonata and the String Quintet are darkly affected by fever; the middle section of A major II almost destroys itself in a frenzy of anguish. I shall refrain from connecting such states of mind with the reality of Schubert's illness, something Fritz Lehner, in his fictional Schubert film of 1986, unfortunately did not avoid. Is it not sufficient to feel that, at certain moments in this music, demons descend to strangle or mercilessly to chase?

In *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* Lawrence Kramer says that Beethoven's Sonata F#, Op. 78 "has the sound and movement of an idyll," but then he moves without misgiving from a technical commentary on the two movements of the Sonata to a discursive account of the idyll of Romanticism:

> . . . the sound and movement of an idyll, the very idyll that Schiller had demanded from the Romantic artist. As Mikhail Bakhtin has suggested, the idyll as a narrative form became increasingly important after the mid-18th century, when Rousseau and others found that its ele-

> ments could "provide material for constituting an isolated individual consciousness.... According to Bakhtin, idyllic narrative is marked by... continuity, cyclical movement, and the absence of rigid boundaries: precisely the major features of the movement before us.

It is difficult to take the force of "very" and "precisely" when the relation between the idyllic situation and Beethoven's notes is precisely what Kramer doesn't show us.

What am I saying? Only this: that there is no merit in treating a symphony as if it had a meaning or meanings. Symphonies do not mean anything, they can't mean anything, because notes are not signs; they do not participate in a code of signs. If in a furniture store I speak the word *chair*, the language being English, the word is a sign; it participates in a code of signs by referring to the class of objects upon which one sits. Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata has sense, but not meaning. Nattiez quotes Mikel Dufrenne saying that "one can engender sense with notes, if by sense we understand the expression proper to melody." True; except that there is more than melody in a piece of music, and "expression" encourages one to ask: "What, in the case of the 'Waldstein' Sonata, is expressed?" Water in a river makes sense, but it means nothing and therefore has nothing to say. If I claim that a piece of music means a lot to me, I may be telling the truth but only if I mean that I associate it with certain experiences which are or have been crucial to me. The only meaning the piece has is the meaning I have given it, an entirely personal attribution.

The problem is that we have a poor vocabulary for dealing with events. It is good enough for describing events if they can be thought of as objects but not if they must be construed as processes or actions. A performance of a symphony is an act, an event; it commands time by beginning with the present moment and, while it lasts, taking possession of the near future. It may, in addition, provoke and eventually appease my senses: my senses of hearing, movement, suspense, fulfillment, and so forth. A symphony does not live by meaning but by taking possession of time, of our attention during this duration of time. Its instruments of possession are sounds, rhythms, cadences, suspensions.

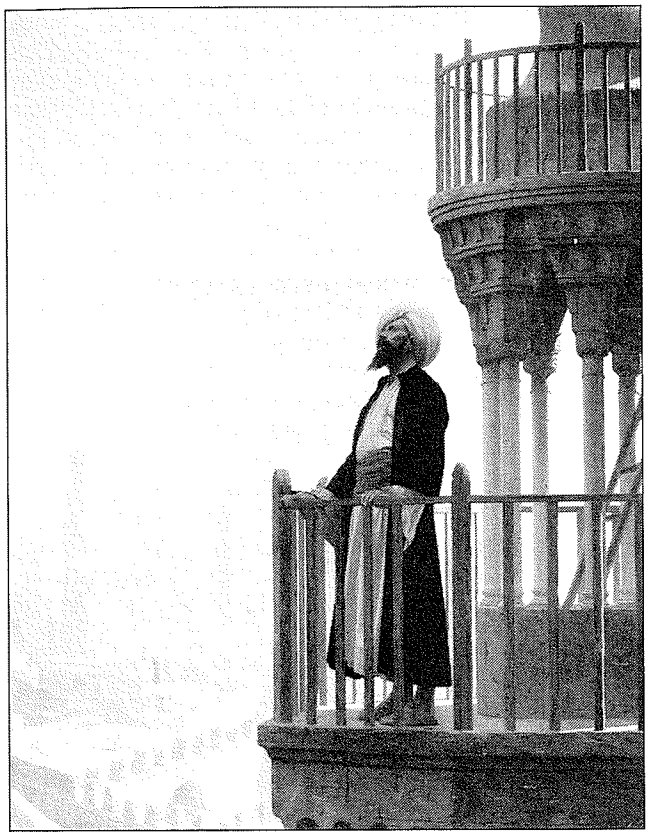
It may be asked: "Aren't the characteristics you have ascribed to music much the same as those we find in abstract ballets, abstract paintings, many of Barbara Hepworth's sculptures? And, if so, haven't critics founds ways of describing these?" I'm not sure that they have. In all of these cases we need "language as gesture," not the language of denotation and reference. We need a discourse responsive to feelings which have not settled for the destiny of being named; feelings still amorphous, nomadic. The name is what kills. When Brendel tells me that Schubert's C minor Sonata is the most neurotic sonata Schubert ever wrote, I'm inclined to say: "Thanks a lot, I suppose."

—Denis Donoghue, currently a Fellow at the Wilson Center, holds the Henry James Chair of Letters at New York University.

1001 Arabian Years

A HISTORY OF THE ARAB PEOPLES. *By Albert Hourani. Harvard. 551 pp. $24.95*

In his *Prolegomena to the History of the World*, the philosopher-historian 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) developed a theory of the relation of cyclic social renewal to state formation that still intrigues scholars and analysts. According to Ibn Khaldun, the earliest human societies were those of the hardy people of the desert and mountains, characterized by *'asabiya*, their strong ties of kinship and group cohesion. The dynasties that those



desert people formed were also hardy and cohesive in ways that citified folk, who lacked *'asabiya*, could not achieve. But every dynasty bore in itself the seeds of decline, as rulers took up residence in cities, became corrupted by luxurious living, and degenerated into tyrants. In due course power would pass to a new group of men from the margins. Thus, wrote Ibn Khaldun, the Greeks and Persians had been replaced by the Arabs; and the Arabs, having founded an empire that stretched from Spain to the Indus valley, were in due course replaced by the Berbers in the West and the Turks in the East.

The moment of Arab physical dominance was, in actuality, surprisingly brief, lasting only from the mid-seventh to the mid-10th century. The territories conquered by Muhammad and a handful of nomadic tribes sweeping out of the Arabian Peninsula (the word "Arab" for Ibn Khaldun and his contemporaries meant bedouin, and was synonymous with cruelty and barbarism) were much too vast to be ruled by a single administration. Within a generation the heirs of Muhammad were tearing at each other in factional strife; within two centuries the office of caliph was passing to local commanders and eventually to palace bodyguards—usually Turks from Central Asia. But in terms of language, religion, and, ultimately, civilization, the Arabs left a mark that would prove far more durable than their military feats.

Albert Hourani, Britain's preeminent historian of the Middle East, possesses an unrivaled authority to tell this story. *A History of the Arab Peoples* is the product of a lifetime's study, combining elegance with insight, compassion with urbanity. As a historian of ideas as well as events—his *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1983) is considered to be the definitive study of modern Islamic-Arabist thought—he is able to chart the often complex interaction between the religion of Islam and the Arabian societies over the centuries.

While Hourani is a pleasure to read, there is, however, a certain blandness about the Olympian detachment with which he views the passions that have shaped the Arab world. To the faithful, the origins of Islam are evidence of the supernatural erupting into history, but for Hourani the birth of Islam is a matter simply to describe. Those seeking a more ambitious analysis of the religious dimension must look to those emerging interdisciplinary, psycho-social disciplines, such as the history of religion itself. Hourani's *History of the Arab Peoples* is sweeping, old-fashioned narrative history, and its limitations are those of the genre.

Before Muhammad, the Arabian peninsula was crisscrossed by tribes warring with one another; the new Islamic religion

forged the bond, a kind of secondary *'asabiya*, that united those tribes and allowed them to direct their warlike fierceness outward. At first, Hourani shows, the Arabs spread faster and further than their religion, although eventually the opposite would be the case. By the end of the first Islamic dynasty (A.D. 750), less than 10 percent of the population of Iran and Iraq, Syria and Egypt, Tunisia and Spain were Muslim. Yet by the end of the 10th century, the proportion had increased substantially, reducing the Jews and Christians to small minorities. (The pressure upon them to convert came not from the "sword," as Christian polemicists used to maintain, but rather from the purse: Christians and Jews paid a special tax from which Muslims were exempt.)

During the next millennium, the Arabs united their sprawling domain through Islam and the *shari'a*, the system of law derived from the Qur'an. This unification was made easier because Islam was a religion of orthopraxy, in which proper social behavior counted for more than particular beliefs. A common Muslim identity thus created an international society which, for all its ethnic diversity, was remarkably homogeneous. "The canons of correct behavior and thought, of learning and high skills linked the generations," Hourani writes. "A network of routes ran through the world of Islam and beyond it. Along them moved not only caravans of camels or donkeys, carrying silks, spices, glass and precious metals, but ideas, news, fashions, patterns of thought and behavior." When the famous traveler Ibn Battuta (1304–1377) wandered from his native Tangiers to China and back, and from there to Spain and the Sahara, he everywhere met scholars with whom he could converse in Arabic. Though he travelled to distant lands, quite as if he were a native in them he would sometimes be appointed a *qadi* or judge, because of the "prestige attached to the exponents of the religious learning in the Arabic tongue."

The medieval period saw power in the Arab part of the Muslim world fall to a particularly hardy group of Turks, the Ottomans. The Ottomans, writes Hourani, were "one more example of the process which had taken place many times in the history of Muslim peoples, the challenge to established dynasties by a military force drawn largely from nomadic peoples." The Ottomans, however, ingeniously avoided the process of decline which Khaldun had described by shielding their bureaucracy and army from decadence. They invented a different type of *'asabiya* by relying upon slave officials who grew up in special households and upon janissaries, members of a special military caste recruited as boys in the Christian Balkans. Before the 19th century there is little sign that the Ottoman system of government, legitimized by the *shari'a*, was seen as "foreign" by most Arab peoples. The "common sense of belonging to an enduring and unshaken world created by the final revelation of God through the Prophet Muhammad" began to founder only when Western powers, with their vastly superior military and technical resources, penetrated Ottoman lands beginning in the 18th century. The slow, gradual importing of democratic ideas shaped some awareness that the Ottoman elites were of a different order from their Arab populations. This awareness, Hourani writes, intensified as the Ottoman Empire declined and later as the Young Turks introduced reforms quite alien to Arab traditionalism.

After 1918, the Ottoman Empire was replaced by Arab successor states whose leaders, from the secular nationalists in Egypt to the Hashemite family in Jordan and Iraq, pursued their own ambitions and agendas. Although the leaders of these nations have usually paid lip service to the ideal of Arab unity, the recent events in the Gulf reveal what happens when the universalist claims of both Arabism and Islam clash directly with the interests of the territorial states. When it came to the crunch, the heirs to pan-Arab, pan-Islamic ideas joined a coalition led by foreign infidels to uphold the sovereignty of a wealthy statelet with dubious claims to legitimacy. Ibn Khaldun likely would not have been

surprised by this; certainly Hourani is not. He points out that since the early 1960s there has been remarkably little change in most Arab regimes or in their policies. The degree of political stability in the region is remarkable and continues despite population explosion, rapid urbanization, the transformation of the countryside, and the continuous eruption of armed conflict. In Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco, no substantial changes have been witnessed for more than a generation; in Libya, South Yemen, and Iraq, groups that seized control by 1970 were still in power two decades later. In all of the countries, the cohesion of the ruling group is still a decisive factor. What is the secret of this surprising stability? It seems the Khaldunian clans have mastered the peculiarly 20th-century *'asabiya* of police surveillance and military intelligence.

Hourani is not the first modern historian to have found in Ibn Khaldun a useful guide to Arab-Islamic history, with its distinctive blend of idealism and pragmatism, generosity and selfishness. Few historians, however, can match Hourani in his knowledge of the original sources, in his breadth of reading in the secondary literature, and above all in the facility with which he translates complex processes into readable English. Specialists will admire the book for the depth of its scholarship; the general reader, for its making the history of the Arabs so freshly accessible.

—Malise Ruthven, a visiting professor of religion and history at the University of California, San Diego, is the author of Islam in the World *(1984).*

NEW TITLES

History

IN SEARCH OF HUMAN NATURE: The Decline and Revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought. *By Carl N. Degler. Oxford. 400 pp. $24.95*

Is that which is uniquely human about us something we are born with, or do we acquire it culturally? Pulitzer Prize-winning Stanford historian Carl Degler says this chicken-or-egg question actually has an answer, or several answers, all of which are determined by extra-scientific, political considerations.

At the turn of the century, Darwin was assumed to have proved that human moral and emotional capacities had evolved from animals, just as our physical shapes had. Seemingly harmless, this conclusion made it possible to cloak a good deal of ideology in the guise of science. Sociology textbooks used throughout the 1920s explained the "backwardness" of African-Americans genetically: "The negro," one such textbook declared, "is not simply a black Anglo-Saxon deficient in school." Sociologists pronounced it "unscientific" to attempt to govern different races by the same system of legal rules. Sterilization laws were passed in America 25 years before they were in Nazi Germany: By 1930, some 30 states had enacted laws to prevent criminals, imbeciles, and rapists from passing on their "deviant genes."

During the 1920s, a reaction to this kind of thinking set in as progressive intellectuals attacked the very idea of human instinct. John Dewey and George Herbert Mead argued that nearly anyone could be taught nearly anything. By the 1930s, such arguments constituted the new scientific orthodoxy, and permeated the thinking of New Deal reformers, who saw different social groups' attainments as the result of favorable or unfavorable discrimination. If there was no such thing as human nature, then those who were socially—not inherently—disadvantaged should be helped.

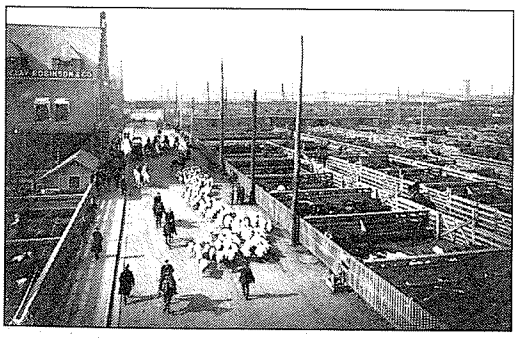
In recent decades, however, Darwinism has made a comeback. Zoologists such as William Hamilton and sociobiologists such as E. O. Wil-

son stress the animal origins of human behavior. Degler believes that by dispensing with the ideology, we can discover a scientific, biological basis for human ethics without all the racism, sexism, and politicized eugenics of the old Social Darwinism. Degler seems not to notice that his own brand of Darwinism—with its elevated biology and moral analogies between people and animals—is an ideological construct, one to which other social scientists may fail to subscribe.

NATURE'S METROPOLIS: Chicago and the Great West. *By William Cronon. Norton. 530 pp. $27.50*

At the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his influential paper on "The Closing of the Frontier in American History." By then, Chicago was already a giant, sprawling city of a million people, yet some older visitors to the Exposition could remember when the city was only a tiny trading post of a few dozen souls. What had made Chicago, practically in the middle of nowhere, grow so fast?

In *Nature's Metropolis*, Cronon, a Yale historian, provides an answer that, among other things, turns Turner's thesis on its head. Turner had depicted the peopling of the frontier as a movement of pioneers and homesteaders escaping an urbanized America in order to create an open society of democratic politics, unfettered economy, and rugged individualism. To the contrary, Cronon argues, the frontier was, in effect, a mirror-image of Chicago. Rural history and urban history are usually separate disciplines, but Cronon shows that from the Appalachians to the Sierra Nevadas there was a single economic "ecosystem" and that Chicago and the hinterlands interacted to determine each other's growth.



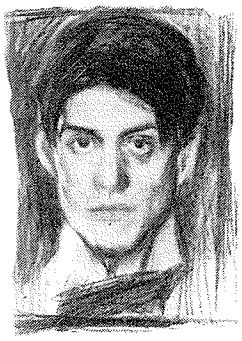
If part of Cronon's story sounds familiar, in other ways he has written the strangest history of Chicago imaginable. One should not turn to *Nature's Metropolis* for any account of Chicago's labor struggles, ethnic conflicts, political machines, or social reformers. Cronon's heroes and villains are not Marshall Field, George Pullman, or Louis Sullivan, but movements of produce and goods. These largely impersonal commodity flows in grain, lumber, and meat tied city and country tightly together, so that to write of the two separately, Cronon says, amounts to "moral schizophrenia."

Cronon's original blend of economics and ecology is persuasive but perplexing. He intends his tales of Chicago's growth in the 19th century "as parables for our own lives as well," but if so, they seem parables without practical application. Because he has denied people their role as the agents of change, the problems he associates with growth—"threats of species extinction, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, widespread destruction of habitat"—seem, after reading *Nature's Metropolis*, less amenable to solution than ever.

Arts & Letters

A LIFE OF PICASSO: Volume I, 1881–1906. *By John Richardson. Random House. 548 pp. $39.95*

Ordinarily, a 550-page biography that brings its subject to the ripe age of 25 might seem to be running in slow-motion. But with regard to Picasso (1881–1973), as art historian Richardson demonstrates, the word "ordinary" does not apply. By age 25 Picasso had painted more celebrated pictures and worked through more styles than most artists do in a lifetime. The Blue period of *La Vie* (1903), the Rose period of *Boy with a Pipe* (1905), the Circus period of *Acrobat and Young Harlequin* (1905), and the classical monumental torsos such as *Two Nudes* (1906) all were in the past, and he was beginning the cubistic *Les Desmoiselles d'Avignon* (1906–07), which Richardson calls "the most innovative painting since Giotto."



Every year a new book about Picasso appears, and the anecdotes are by now legends. Almost everyone knows the story of how Picasso's father, himself a painter, recognized his son's superior genius at age 13 and laid down his own brushes forever. Nearly as famous is how Picasso passed the entrance examination to the Barcelona art academy, which normally requires a month, in a single day. Richardson has looked behind the familiar legends. He finds that, in fact, Picasso's father continued painting well into old age and that the Barcelona examination required only two days and that Picasso, like every other applicant, took both to complete it. Richardson has in effect written the first biography of Picasso that is neither hagiography nor demonology.

Once Picasso is stripped of the apocryphal legends, however, his talent is still so large and so early manifested—by age 15 he was painting masterpieces—as almost to defy explanation. To his credit, Richardson does not try to "explain" Picasso's genius—that is, he doesn't offer any single theory—but he supplies enough details so that readers can put together the pieces for themselves. Picasso is usually considered a French painter who just happened to have been born in Spain. Richardson sees him as rather a Spanish painter who happened to live in France (after age 19). Richardson argues that Picasso's limited palette, his "tenebrism," was a legacy of "the dark religious works of Spanish painters." And Picasso's obsession with *miranda fuerte* ("strong gazing") is a character-trait in Andalusia. As anthropologist David Gilmore wrote, "In a culture where the sexes are segregated . . . the eye becomes the erogenous zone par excellence."

Picasso grew up not only in Andalusia but all over Spain, as his family moved from Malaga in the south to Corona on the northwestern coast. Everywhere Picasso remained the outsider, speaking every dialect (and later French) with an accent and taking great liberty both with language and customs. He displayed the greatest discipline as a painter yet he was contemptuous of authorities and rules. He would abandon friends and lovers when they no longer served his needs. "For all his artistic courage, Picasso lacked moral courage," Richardson comments. "Work, sex, and tobacco were his only addictions."

Richardson argues that by the time Picasso moved to Paris in 1900, his character was already set. But the writers he met there—Max Jacob, Guillaume Apollinaire, Gertrude Stein—taught the Spanish provincial about symbolism, mysticism, black humor, and the absurd, and they gave him an unrivalled initiation into the emerging avant garde. They helped Picasso escape from 19th-century romanticism into the analytical angularity of the machine age. Yet more than any of those writers' works, Picasso's paintings—such as the *Demoiselles*—mark the artistic passage from the 19th century to the 20th. Picasso liked to quote a line from the poet Luis de Gongora: "The eyes of that Andalusian are killing me." And Picasso's own eyes, in effect, wrought the demise of that older art.

THE SEMINARS OF JACQUES LACAN. *By Jacques Lacan. Ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. by John Forrester and Sylvana Tomaselli. Norton. Two volumes. 314 pp.; 343 pp. $24.95 each*

In America the intellectual avant garde has hailed Jacques Lacan (1901–81) as a master of contemporary thought. But in France within his own profession, psychoanalysis, he has often been denounced. His French colleagues distrusted his methods (including his famous five-minute sessions with patients) and bristled at his lofty pronouncements. Lacan certainly made no friends when he insisted that his fellow analysts were betrayers of Freud. In 1953, the members of the Paris Psychoanalytic Society forced Lacan to resign as president and, in effect, expelled him from the Society.

That crystalline lucidity for which French prose from Voltaire to Valéry is celebrated is absent in Lacan. His terminology is arcane and his prose obscure and circuitous. Yet in these seminars, given after his break with the Society, he was at pains to charm his followers and to make clear his differences from other schools of psychoanalysis.

Lacan's first words to the seminar participants were, "I would very much like to start this new year . . . by telling you—*The fun is over!*" In Lacan's view, what was fun, or at least easy, in contemporary psychoanalytic practice was its belief in an autonomous ego: that in each person there is a centered, stable self that can act and choose freely of its own accord. Lacan caricatured this "ego" by likening it to "*the-little-man-within-the-man*, who has an autonomous life within the subject and who is there to defend it—*Father, look out to the right. Father, look out to the left*—against whatever might assail him from without as from within."

Lacan called his denial of the ego "a return to origins," meaning that he, like Freud, emphasized the primacy of the incorrigible unconscious. But Lacan's view of the unconscious is hardly Freudian: "The unconscious is structured like a language." Lacan's proposition, in other words, is this: Once we dispense with the ego, we are not cast adrift into psychic amorphousness; rather we can explore the nature of grammar and syntax in order to understand the mind's dark workings. As Elizabeth Roudinesco noted in *Jacques Lacan and Co.* (1991), this linguistic emphasis changed psychoanalysis from a medical technique for curing symptoms into "a discovery of the mind, a theoretical journey," and, outside the bounds of his profession, it made Lacan, along with Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, a leading intellectual in postwar France.

Unlike Freud, whom supposedly he was championing, Lacan did not believe psychoanalysis was a science. "What holds good in the art of the expert cook," he conceded pragmatically, "is also true for psychoanalysis." The discipline closest to psychoanalysis for Lacan was not science but literature, and he even used Poe's "Purloined Letter" as a text. Many literary critics in America seized upon this cue, interpreting "texts" in the way a psychiatrist interprets his patient's unconscious: by explaining what the text (rather like the "ego") presents but cannot itself understand.

Yet Lacan's endeavor is stranger than any popular literary trend can suggest. The Lacanian imperative—to end the "ego-istic" perspective, the false "I" which considers itself the maker and doer of its own life—violates the comfortable, common sense of the way things work. Dispensing with the ego may yield fresh perspectives, but Lacan was under no illusion that it would have wide appeal. Noting the revival of ego psychoanalysis in Freud's later career, Lacan wrote, "There was a general rush, exactly like the kids getting out of school—*Ah! Our nice little ego is back again. It all makes sense now.*"

Contemporary Affairs

THE IDEA BROKERS: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite. *By James A. Smith. The Free Press. 313 pp. $24.95*

"What I fear," Woodrow Wilson warned in 1912, "is a government of experts." According to historian James A. Smith, Wilson's fear is now an American reality.

Ever since Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, rulers have relied upon expert advisers. The uniqueness of Smith's 20th-century "idea brokers" is that they have turned "advising the prince" into a growth industry. They ply their trade in more than 1,000 "think tanks" throughout the United States. One hundred think tanks are located in the nation's capital, 60 to 70 more in the New York area, but no major city, no state capital, no large university is without at least one think tank operating in its midst. Every issue and item on the public agenda, from national security on down to child nutrition, has a think tank specifically devoted to its study. Day and night think tankers are at work—attempting to shape legislation, influence the media, or simply get their books adopted in graduate seminars—utilizing every possible strategy to affect government and public opinion.

A few think tanks like Washington's Brookings Institution are prestigious establishments with multimillion-dollar endowments. Most, however, are hardly more than a secretary and some dreary offices where junior idea brokers frantically write grant proposals in order to keep going. Despite these uncertainties, idea brokers shun the more secure academic or government bureaucracies where they could not speak out as freely and as quickly.

Although "policy intellectual" conjures up the image of a liberal, Smith shows that conser-

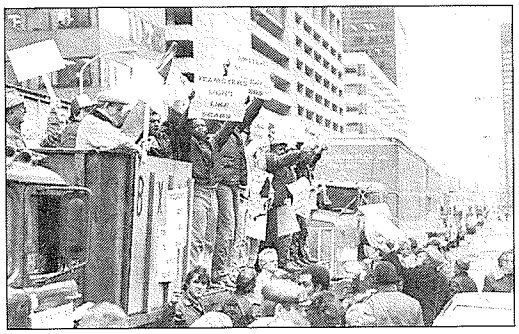
vatives have made the best use of think tanks. Eighty years ago, when Wilson was deploring "experts," business leaders like Robert S. Brookings realized that corporate interests required more than moralistic hymns to laissez faire; they needed to have a direct impact on specific government policies. Many think tanks of the 1920s, like the National Bureau of Economic Research, attempted to give "fact-based" economic guidance to the pro-business Coolidge and Hoover administrations. Despite the experts, the economy crashed.

After its eclipse during the New Deal era, this form of conservative advocacy was revived in the 1950s when William J. Baroody, Sr., took over Washington's American Enterprise Institute (AEI). "One of the shrewdest and most energetic men ever to preside over a Washington research institute," as Smith describes him, Baroody tirelessly sought to combat what he called "the liberal intellectual monopoly." A generation later AEI and other conservative think tanks supplied the ideas and the personnel for the Reagan Revolution.

But is this the "government of experts" that Woodrow Wilson feared? Wilson worried that experts would use their supposed status as "scientists" to foreclose debate and exclude the ordinary citizen. Something like that nearly happened in the 1950s when the Air Force employed its think tank, the Rand Corporation, to confine nuclear policy questions to approved "experts." But, Smith concludes, the mass entry of the idea brokers into the public "marketplace of ideas" has in fact demystified expertise and has thus, if anything, intensified public policy debate.

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON? Trying to Be for Labor When It's Flat on Its Back. *By Thomas Geoghegan. Farrar, Straus. 267 pp. $19.95*

Thomas Geoghegan loves the rousing Labor Day parades; he loves the St. Joseph's Day feasts when the rank-and-file reaffirm their solidarity; he loves winning legal battles for what he calls America's "real counterculture." In short, he loves being a labor lawyer. That, however, does not mean he *likes* the modern American labor movement.



Since entering the fold some 20 years ago, Geoghegan has witnessed a steady decline of union vigor. Union membership today, he reports, accounts for only 16 percent of the American workforce, down from 20 to 25 percent a mere decade ago. In Chicago, where Geoghegan practices, the steelworkers' union alone lost 50,000 members during the 1980s. Geoghegan's prediction for organized labor is hardly sanguine. "A dumb, stupid mastodon of a thing" it is, he says, a beast well on its way to extinction.

Who does Geoghegan fault for labor's demise? Everyone. Industry, the unions themselves, and the government all come in for blame. American industry's obsession with immediate profits instead of investment in the future has proven disastrous for workers. Japan's Nippon Steel alone spends more on research and development than all U.S. steel companies combined. In the 1980s, many unprofitable mills closed and thousands of union members lost their jobs. Even more union members were on the street as industries, ranging from steel to automaking, began busting unions in order to maximize profits. The practice of firing union employees (usually illegally) and replacing them with "scabs" saves, according to one study Geoghegan cites, 20 percent on the nation's wage bills annually.

As shortsighted as industry is, Geoghegan thinks union members may be even more so. "Boy, were they dumb," is his comment on their always taking the immediate buck instead of demanding, or even wanting, company stock or assuming control over company pension funds. Those few unions that acquired stock in lieu of salary raises, such as the machinists and the pilots, are in a relatively powerful position today.

Of the culprits behind labor's downfall, none has been more influential, Geoghegan argues, than the federal government. In 1947, for example, the Republican-controlled Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act outlawing the tactics—mass picketing, sit-downs, and secondary strikes—that had made union-building so successful. Yet it was Ronald Reagan, Geoghegan says, who dealt labor its worst blows. Thanks to Reaganomics, America in the 1980s lost one out of three jobs in heavy industry, creating "a pool of scabs as big as Lake Michigan." And Reagan's decision in 1981 that the air traffic controllers' strike was unlawful signalled that the strike as a bargaining tool was dead. In 1972 organized labor called 443 strikes nationwide; in 1989, only 43.

Geoghegan tries hard "to be for labor when it's flat on its back," but perhaps the surest sign of the times is that he, too, seems as befuddled by the events of the past decade as the rank-and-file he represents. He would like comprehensive labor-law reform, for Congress to change the Taft-Hartley and Wagner Acts, and for union members to be able to strike effectively, but he has no practical suggestions for bringing such things about. Organized labor may be thriving in Canada and Japan and Sweden, but in America—or so Geoghegan claims—one can only watch as "labor shambles around like Frankenstein [with] half its brain gone."

Science & Technology

TOO HOT TO HANDLE: The Race for Cold Fusion. *By Frank Close. Princeton. 376 pp. $24.95*

On March 23, 1989, Martin Fleischmann and Stanley Pons, two chemists at the University of Utah, announced an astonishing discovery: They had uncovered the secret of cold fusion.

During fusion, the nuclei of two atoms are melded together, freeing substantial new energy. This is what the sun does on a massive scale at a temperature of 100 million degrees Celsius. Pons and Fleischmann, however, announced they had achieved it with a battery, palladium metal, and water at room temperature (hence the name *cold* fusion). Through cold fusion, Pons and Fleischmann reported, a glass of water could power a car for 19 years. The chemists made their announcement at a press conference one day after the Exxon *Valdez* disaster in Alaska, when the world was more than receptive to news of a clean, safe, limitless energy source. Newspapers from London's *Financial Times* to the *Wall Street Journal* gave front-page coverage to the miracle.

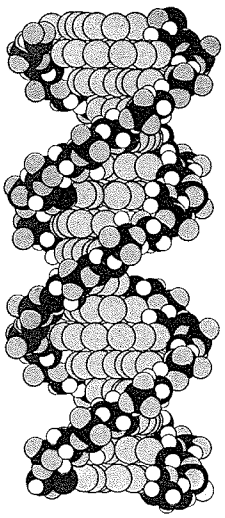
If their experiment had proved valid, Fleischmann and Pons's achievement would rank somewhere near the invention of the wheel. But, according to Frank Close, a prominent physicist and science writer, there were three things wrong with the picture. First, it was unlikely that chemists would find the key to a problem in nuclear physics. Second, they announced their findings to the public before they could be reviewed by other scientists. And last and most important, their claim was incorrect. Pons and Fleischmann had misread a small element in the data. What had occurred in the test tube was a simple chemical reaction, not a nuclear one.

Ordinarily the mistake would have been detected because ordinarily scientific discoveries are announced through scientific journals, where the material can be mulled over and tested by peers. Why did the Utah scientists break protocol? Initially, they feared being scooped by competitors. After they got swept up by the enthusiasm for their findings, they and the University of Utah did not have the courage to turn back. For "the most bizarre 500 days in the history of modern science," dozens of laboratories and hundreds of scientists attempted to repeat Pons and Fleischmann's experiment—but to no avail. Instead of acknowledging their error, the Utah chemists questioned the calibration of the equipment other experimenters used.

Research on fusion, however, remains a high priority among physicists. "Pollution from the dregs of an ever increasing energy consumption threatens to poison everyone in their own waste," Close writes. "The only real hope for mankind in the long term appears to be fusion." On four continents scientists have consumed billions of dollars trying to produce utilizable fusion. Likely there will be no overnight, miracle discovery; the Pons and Fleischmann fairy tale, alas, will never come true.

GENOME. *By Jerry E. Bishop and Michael Waldholz. Simon & Schuster. 352 pp. $22.95*

"It is difficult, even hazardous, to attempt to describe a scientific breakthrough while it is still in progress." And, with that reservation, *Wall Street Journal* reporters Bishop and Waldholz begin describing "the most astonishing scientific adventure of our time" as they call the Human Genome Project—an immense 15-year, $3 billion effort to map the estimated 100,000–250,000 genes that make up the human body.



The Human Genome Project may lead to one of the greatest medical breakthroughs in history: the ability to determine people's susceptibility to various ailments, from Huntington's chorea and cystic fibrosis to schizophrenia, just by testing their genes. Theoretically, the potential exists for curing a range of maladies in the womb, and already researchers in a budding field known as gene therapy are injecting healthy genes into cells known to have genetic flaws, to test whether the healthy genes will take hold and multiply. "At the very least," the authors write, "finding these aberrant genes permits those who have inherited them to avoid dangerous environments . . . . The alcoholism-prone individual can be warned to avoid alcohol." Likewise, those prone to heart disease will know to monitor their diets.

Ever since Gregor Mendel's experiments with pea plants in the 1860s, we have known that traits such as size and coloring can be passed from one generation to the next. For the discovery of genetic material that passes on such traits, James Watson along with Francis Crick won the Nobel Prize in 1953. They showed that DNA, a long twisting ladder with each "rung" composed of a pair of base molecules, was the key genetic material and that it could be found in virtually every living cell. Forty years later, the same James Watson is directing the Human Genome Project and its almost inconceivable task of identifying the three billion chemical subunits of human DNA. Such identification may, in turn, give clues to a person's metabolic propensity to disease.

There is a potentially dark side to the Human Genome Project. Last year, the American Council on Life Insurance said of genetic testing, "Profound ethical questions will be posed concerning the practice of medicine, procreation, employment, privacy, individual versus societal rights, confidentiality, 'the right to know,' and 'the right not to know.'" Already insurance companies are considering genetic testing of applicants for cystic fibrosis. In the future, it is conceivable that companies will demand genetic reports of prospective employees, politicians of their opponents, and even that parents, knowing their prospective children's genetic makeup, might choose which ones to have. But for good or bad (or for good *and* bad), so the authors conclude, "the technique of gene identification or 'mapping,' cannot be stopped any more than the technology of the automobile, the machine gun, or the atomic bomb was stopped."

Who Killed Hollywood?

If it were a movie, it would go like this: Hollywood is a fabulous city of dreams that dazzles the nation with its mighty studios and marvelous movies, its handsome stars and smashing starlets, its glitz and incomparable glamor. But then TV comes along and, like some cheap hood in a B movie, leaves our dream town dead in an alley. That is hokum in the grandest Hollywood tradition, argues film historian Douglas Gomery. Here he tells what really happened to Tinseltown.

by Douglas Gomery

There are two images from my youth that I shall never be able to shake. There was that clear Saturday afternoon in October when I rode my bicycle downtown to see a show at the Rialto, only to look up at the marquee and see the chilling announcement, "20 lanes of bowling." No movie I have ever seen has jolted me more.

The thousands of hours I spent in Allentown, Pennsylvania's wondrous Rialto Theatre formed the core of my adolescent education. I learned "lessons" in proper teen rebellion from the experts, James Dean, Sal Mineo, and Natalie Wood in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). From the master, Alfred Hitchcock, I learned the true nature of panic in *Rear Window* (1954). How could my beloved baroque movie palace become just another bowling barn, of which Allentown already had more than a dozen?

The second jolt came a few years later, in the summer of 1960, when I spied spread across a page of *Life* a photograph of a crumbled Roxy Theatre, with silent film star Gloria Swanson standing amid the ruins. My mother had taken me to that mecca of movie palaces as a special treat during infrequent trips to New York City. Now even that 5,000-seat, gilded, festooned "wonder theater" at the corner of 51st Street and Sixth Avenue had been torn down. None of it seemed to make sense. Or did it?

Even in isolated Allentown I could stare across the living room and guess the answer. During the 1950s television hit the United States with a force unmatched by any other technical innovation of this century. When my family moved to Allentown in 1950, few of my friends had a set. I would race over to Dave Gearhart's house to watch; his father was a doctor and rich enough to pay the $500 a new set cost—about $2,000 in today's inflated dollars. A decade later, when my teachers forced me to watch the Nixon-Kennedy presidential debates (the very year that the Roxy was torn down), everybody had a TV set.

If the death of the glamorous Hollywood these palaces represented is viewed as a kind of *film noir* murder mystery, the identity of the killer seems all too obvious.

Scholars have tended to agree: TV killed Hollywood. After all, the "murder" happened right before their eyes, as it did before mine. And TV already had a criminal record, having helped undermine the habit of reading and the academic vigor of America's children. In his encyclopedic *Movies and Society* (1970), I. C. Jarvie of Canada's York University writes: "Until the advent of television in the late forties Hollywood was peerless. Then television began to eat into film audiences, cinemas began to close in America, and the production figures fell seriously." This is one of the great dividing lines in film history. Before TV we had Hollywood's Golden Age; after TV, a Tarnished Age.

Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho *(1960). A darling of the critics who was also a box-office success, a film master who also worked in TV, Hitchcock showed Hollywood how to survive after its Golden Age.*

Moviegoing in America reached a statistical peak in 1946: Attendance at America's 20,000 movie houses roughly equaled the total national population, 79.4 million. Seventeen years later, attendance had been cut in half, and then cut in half again—all while the population was growing to historical highs.

Going to the picture show ceased to be a regular habit. Cinema buffs only attended recommended films, after pondering a number of serious reviews. Otherwise, it took a blockbuster on the order of a *Godfather* (1972) or *M*A*S*H* (1970) to lure the average couch potato to a theater. In its heyday Hollywood released nearly 500 features annually, plus 1,000 short subjects and newsreels. As the 1960s turned into the 1970s, the American movie industry was lucky to turn out 200 features in a year. The average studio went from producing a new feature each week to one each month by 1970. The age of Hollywood movie factories masterminded by legendary moguls like Nicholas M. Schenck gave way to an era of blockbusters "packaged" by fast-talking agents. A part of American mass culture had been lost forever.

The movies as kitsch had been transformed into cinema as art. Directors became "filmmakers," with framed graduate degrees in film from places like UCLA and NYU hanging on their office walls. It became possible to major in film studies at Harvard and the University of Michigan. The *New York Times* treated film as a meaningful form of art. And commentators seeking to gauge the national mood could be counted on to take some bearings from the relative popularity of Rambo and Jane Fonda.

Could all of this change have been caused by the coming of television? Could the Rialto and Roxy have disappeared for some other reason?

Apart from simple observation, the "blame TV" argument rests on a straightforward principle of microeconomics known as the substitution effect. If we use a good or service for a certain purpose and a cheaper substitute comes along, we ought to abandon the former and adopt the latter. No one ever considered the flickering black-and-white images on television a perfect substitute for a movie show, but even as a child I could appreciate that no one charged you admission to see "The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis" or "The Untouchables."

But in applying any theory—economic or not—one must square the logic with the

facts. And the basic figures for movie attendance do not square with the "blame TV" explanation. Simply put, attendance at America's movie houses began to drop in 1946 and slid most steeply in the late 1940s, long before most American families even had a set. Indeed, before 1950 only a tiny minority of U.S. citizens had even laid eyes on a television. By 1950, there were still only one million TV sets in use in the country, most of them in the Northeast. New Yorkers and Chicagoans had TV, but to their cousins in Wichita and Green Bay it was as exotic as a skyscraper or subway.

The technology was ready, but because of a four-year freeze on the licensing of new stations that the Federal Communications Commission imposed while it pondered the best way to divide the TV spectrum, most communities in the heartland of the nation did not have TV stations until 1954. It was not until that year and the next that large numbers of TV sets began appearing in America's living rooms. But these very TV-less folks had quit going out to the movies years earlier.

Perhaps they switched to something else, something that historians and others have since, unaccountably, failed to recognize. If, during the late 1940s, growing families in the suburbs abandoned the movies, they should have begun to look for something in the way of cheap, mass entertainment that would be available at home while caring for young children. Like radio.

In fact, there was a brief surge in the radio business in the years immediately after World War II. Radio advertising and profits increased, cresting in 1952. For stockholders, at least, the late 1940s were radio's true Golden Age. CBS and NBC made millions programming to new suburbanites. Probably the best manifestation of that forgotten prosperity was the famous talent raids conducted by CBS in 1948 and 1949. CBS founder William Paley was making so much money in radio that he could bid millions to lure away "Jack Benny" and "Amos 'n' Andy" from NBC. Paley's rival at NBC, David Sarnoff, believed that TV was right around the corner, so he let Paley steal his best radio talent. Upstart CBS made a killing, and with its big earnings from radio was able to catch up to NBC. When TV did emerge in the mid-1950s CBS was ahead, and it would continue to win TV's prime-time ratings race for an entire generation.

So Hollywood lost out to radio, not television. And the best way to understand what happened to Hollywood, it turns out, is not in terms of the mesmerizing effects of that brilliant new technology in a box but in terms of a far more elemental restructuring of American life that occurred during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

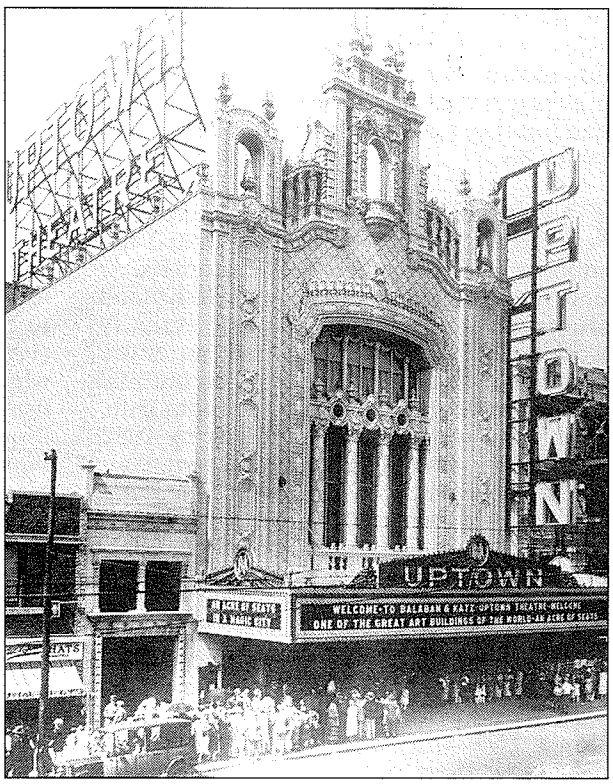
During World War II, most Americans had earned more than they had since the heady days of the Roaring '20s. But there was precious little to buy. Auto factories were turning out tanks, not Fords, and lumber was used to build barracks, not houses. At the urging of film stars and other famous Americans, people put their money in savings bonds. As soon as the war was over, refrigerators and autos began to appear—and then rapidly disappear—in record numbers as Americans cashed in their bonds for all the things that promised to make life fun again.

This spending spree focused on home buying. Americans accelerated a trek which they had begun at the turn-of-the-century, the movement to single-family dwellings in the suburbs. To appreciate the scope of this internal migration one should compare it to the transatlantic pilgrimage from Europe around the turn of the century. In 1907, when that migration was at its peak, more than one million Europeans landed in the United States. This also was precisely the yearly magnitude of the great suburban migration of the late 1940s. Underwritten by Veterans Administration mortgages, home ownership in the United States increased by nearly 50 percent between 1945 and '50. Ten years later, for the first time in history, more Americans owned houses than rented.

***Douglas Gomery**, a professor of communications at the University of Maryland, is senior researcher at the Wilson Center's Media Studies Project. He is the author of several books, including* The Hollywood Studio System *(1986) and* Movie History: A Survey *(1991).* *He would like to thank his unpaid economic consultant, Marilyn Moon.*

Coupled with this massive move to the suburbs was another historically important change. Two-child households, so common since the turn of the century, gave way to the large families of the Baby Boom.

This overpowering demand for suburban life is, I think, the only plausible explanation for the abandonment of the moviegoing habit. Virtually overnight, the core of the movie audience vanished. After the war, Americans married at younger and younger ages; the average age of first wedlock fell from 24 to 19. There were few singles left to go on dates to the movies, and young couples were in no position to go: They were having more children, and having them sooner, than their elders had. In the Great Depression (and today) young couples got themselves "established" before they thought of starting a family. But in 1950 a typical 18-year-old bride and her 20-year-old husband were having their first child before either could vote. The new domesticity left little time or money to catch a show.



The main attraction: When Chicago's Uptown Theatre opened its doors in 1924, crowds lined up at 9 A.M. for a peek. As late as the 1960s, the great big-city movie palaces still enjoyed a virtual monopoly on first-run movies.

In a stunning reversal of another long-term demographic trend, well-off and well-educated Americans had more children than any other portion of the population. Lawyers, doctors, and executives contributed proportionally more to the Baby Boom than did factory and farm workers. And who since the age of the nickelodeon had been Hollywood's best customers? As Robert Sklar writes in *Movie-Made America* (1975): "The more education a person had, the more often he or she went to the movies; people at higher income levels attended movies more frequently than people in lower brackets."

Cutting out the weekly picture show made sense when one had to worry about inflated mortgage payments. The move to the suburbs also made it vastly more difficult simply to get to a show. The matrix of movie houses that had served Hollywood so well prior to 1945 was centered at the heart of the American city. Downtown movie palaces had run the best Hollywood could offer. My beloved Rialto and Roxy were located in central shopping districts, positioned for easy access by streetcar. After its première run downtown, a Hollywood feature of the 1930s snaked its way through a network of neighborhood theaters. For a year (or more), it would appear as part of the packages at the network of more than 10,000 neighborhood theaters that served up double features, Saturday afternoon matinees of "B" serials and westerns, and newsreels and cartoons for the whole family. People generally walked to their local Paradise and Uptown, often without bothering to check what was playing beforehand.

The postwar suburbs were built miles from downtown; no one could (or wanted to) walk back to the old neighborhood Bijou. No streetcars ran from Levittown, New York or Greendale, Wisconsin to the old downtown. Walking was passé; suburbanites piled the family into the new Olds '88

or Hudson Hornet and rode in style. Besides, everyone knew there was no parking downtown. Gone were the days of simply grabbing a coat on the spur of the moment and heading for the neighborhood Egyptian or Rialto.

Of course, the Hollywood movie moguls did not simply sit still and watch the suburbs steal away their best customers. At first they reined in costs. Any Hollywood studio employee who was not actually working on a feature was fired; an entire special effects unit might be wiped out and only a single guard left at the studio gate. Even stars were let go. Suddenly by 1952 Hollywood seemed like a ghost town.

The new studio bosses also cut the number of films released. Increasingly, each motion picture had to be a potential blockbuster, able to stand on its own as a media event. Studio units making "B" movies, never-ending serials, animated cartoons, and newsreels—all regular movie palace fare during the 1930s and 1940s (and now seen in perpetual rerun on cable television's TNT and American Movie Channel)—saw their production slowed from weekly editions to special attractions and finally to nothing. All disappeared from the American movie industry by the mid-1960s. Hollywood, which had released a new feature every day of the year, was reduced to producing and releasing but a handful of new feature films each month.

A helicopter fancifully included in Life*'s Dream Home of 1946 showed Hollywood's problem: suburbanites' distance from downtown theaters.*

Studio bosses returned to their bag of tricks for strategies they had scoffed at less than a decade before. In the late 1940s, Hollywood began for the first time to regularly offer feature films that catered to an audience serious about its cinema. If young men and women were staying home to raise families, perhaps the "older" folks—for Hollywood, people aged 30 and above—might venture to the movie house to see film art. So Andy Hardy and Roy Rogers gave way to *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947), an Academy Award–winning tale in which Gregory Peck discovers anti-Semitism; *The Snake Pit* (1948), a tale of mental illness starring Olivia de Havilland; and *Pinky* (1949), a pioneer drama about a black woman passing for white. Oscar honored the adult film when *On the Waterfront* (1954), a grim, realistic tale of union corruption on the New York docks, won eight statues. Films such as *Marty* (1955), with Ernest Borgnine's portrayal of a lonely, alienated man, and *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), a complex examination of the guilt and shame associated with World War II, became intellectual reference points for a generation.

Before the late 1940s, studio executives shunned serious movies that dealt with complex subjects. Jack L. Warner is reputed to have told one producer: "If I want to send a message, I'll use Western Union."

Many a theater owner, seeing increasing red ink and wanting to rescue his investment, began to program "art" films, which were flowing into the United States from abroad. By the mid-1950s, even Allentown had its Nineteenth Street art theater. Roberto Rossellini's *Open City* (1946) and Vittorio De Sica's *Shoeshine* (1946), masterful, grim, Italian neo-realism at its best, proclaimed the coming of film as art. For a time, Hollywood even tried to capture the mood and tone of the best of the European filmmakers by making a number of features abroad.

Serious films showed that they could make money; Brigitte Bardot's *. . . And God Created Woman* (1957) kept many a neighborhood theater in business. Moreover it set new standards for portraying sexuality on the American movie screen. (Today it can be shown on cable television's Arts & Entertainment channel without provoking

any comment or objection.) It became possible for Hollywood to deal frankly with sexual mores and with relationships that were not innocent and pure and which did not always come to a happy ending. Among the best-known products of the new Hollywood were *Peyton Place* (1957), *Butterfield 8* (1960), and *Lolita* (1962).

But Hollywood executives generally remained far more comfortable with variations on the "sell the sizzle not the steak" formula. Beginning with Cinerama in 1952, they rolled out new technology after new technology to wow the public. As promised, film fans of all ages were thrilled by the famous roller coaster ride in the original Cinerama. For a time during the last months of 1953, "3-D" added another dimension to films, from George Sidney's *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) to Alfred Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder* (1954). But the required cardboard glasses and frequently out-of-focus images doomed "3-D."

CinemaScope and VistaVision offered clear images of a size and range unmatched in movie history—not to mention by those little boxes in American living rooms that Hollywood was blaming for its troubles. Roman gladiators appeared 10 feet tall in Twentieth Century Fox's CinemaScoped *The Robe* (1953). John Wayne was never more towering than when he roamed Monument Valley in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), shot in VistaVision.

With this surge of wide-screen systems came stereo sound. Music and dialogue were now expected to wash over the spectator from all sides. Movie theaters were remodeled and refitted and new, larger screens were installed, but few new theaters were built. The core problem, the suburban audience, was never addressed.

Moreover, buying a new screen and installing stereo sound meant less money for other amenities. Splendid service with an usher in every aisle gave way to a single teenager taking tickets. What space remained in lobbies was transformed into cafeterias, filled with the smell of popcorn, stray candy wrappers, and trash cans overflowing with cups and wrappers. Luxurious carpets and ornate chandeliers faded into frayed floor coverings and dingy lighting.

There were a few changes for the better. After 1960 all major Hollywood films glowed in reds, yellows, and blues that made their predecessors seem grimy and dark. Producers selected from a multitude of color processes, from the highbrow Technicolor to the lesser lights of Cinecolor and Pathe Color. In films such as Douglas Sirk's *Written on the Wind* (1956) and Vincente Minnelli's *Gigi* (1958) filmmakers stunned spectators of the day with vivid colors. Soon after, movies in color became the industry standard, and have remained so to this day.

By the late 1960s, the movie industry had found itself. The fad of multiple "Scopes" and added "Dimensions" ended; features were shot in Eastman Color with Panavision cameras in some wide-screen ratio larger than the four–by–three images that set the industry standard before 1952, yet smaller than CinemaScope. No one could mistake these theatrical films for television images.

Hollywood slowly came to recognize that it must take its new films to the suburbs. First came the drive-in. Across the country, shrewd entrepreneurs began clearing cornfields, putting up massive screens, and installing speakers in semicircular rows. Admission was just a dollar a carload. While mom and dad enjoyed the show, the kids could sleep in the back seat—or at least pretend to. In 1946, there were fewer than 100 drive-ins; 10 years later there were more than 3,000 and they were still spreading. Families from the suburbs flocked to the new auto theaters, and by 1960 one of every four exhibition dollars was coming from these "ozoners" (to use industry lingo).

But even the drive-in's ardent proponents agreed that viewing a CinemaScope film from the back seat through a dirty windshield could not provide the basis for a new mass entertainment industry. The ultimate theatrical solution was, like one of those grand old Hollywood extravaganzas, many years in the making: the suburban shopping-center movie complex. The movie industry followed the department store as it searched out its lost customers. As late as 1967, one still had to go downtown to see a first-run movie. By the early 1970s, the anonymous multiplexes, located near highway crossroads, were becoming

the new locus for moviegoing. Today, the movie theater is just one more outlet among the Sears and Waldenbooks.

But the 'plexes did bring back the theatrical movie audience. Theatrical revenues picked up and surged into the billions of dollars per year. The young Baby Boomers, though weaned on TV, became a faithful teenage movie audience. The movie season came to consist of summer and the Christmas and Easter holiday seasons, when these young people were not in school. This new moviegoing audience made the blockbusters, *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977), and *E. T.* (1981) possible. The overwhelming success of these films confirmed the new dominance of the suburban multiplex theaters—and also meant the end of my beloved Rialto and Roxy.

Simple explanations developed while events are unfolding seldom turn out to be as neat and clean as we would like. Blaming TV for Hollywood's fate is like saying the butler did it. The argument was developed in the 1950s and has stuck. But just because one thing seems to happen at the same time as another (the fall of movie attendance and the rise of TV viewing) does not mean that one caused the other. We ought to keep our historical thinking clear and systematic, even when something as fun as the movies is involved.

There is another lesson. We ought to stop blaming television for everything. It was not so long ago, in fact, that movies were seen as the source of all evil in American society. One influential academic study of the movies' baneful influence was titled *Our Movie Made Children* (1933). By 1960 television had replaced the movies as the cause of all that was bad in society. Although no scientist has ever proved a direct connection between the ills of society and watching too much TV (or too many movies), it is easy to find fault with the Boob Tube. TV is just too seductive, too much fun. Not being able to shake the puritanical spirit of our forebears, we can't resist fingering it for everything from declining SAT scores to an increasing crime rate.

TV and movies certainly influence our lives, but so do our changing lifestyles affect the development of these mass media. The movie audience after World War II was "lost" not because of anything the movies or television did, but because those institutions, like all others in American society and culture, were transformed by a wholesale, radical break in social and economic history. No aspect of life in the United States escaped the forces of suburbanization and the Baby Boom. Universities were turned from institutions for the wealthy few into instruments for mass education of an advanced society. Cities declined. Could we have imagined the enormous popularity of rhythm-and-blues repackaged for teen suburban audiences before the arrival of the Beatles? All of this—and more—happened because of the vast changes in American lifestyle after World War II.

But not all has been lost. The audience for movies has never been larger. True, few of today's viewers are trekking to the neighborhood movie house, but millions stare at the unspooling of Hollywood's past glories and the continual rerunning of contemporary blockbusters—on television. And with a VCR anyone can become the "house manager" of his or her own home theater. It is a wonder that any contemporary movie buff ever ventures outside. Hollywood has benefited and has never been more healthy. The Japanese paid $4 billion for Columbia Pictures in 1989 and twice that for Universal Pictures because they knew there was only one Hollywood. Even with their billions they could not fabricate their own Tinseltown in Tokyo. Not accidentally, movies are one of the nation's most popular exports. Movie stars advise members of Congress and often become the centers of presidential campaigns. One of them even became president.

So TV did not kill Hollywood. In the great Hollywood whodunit there is, after all, not even a corpse. The film industry never died. Only where we enjoy its latest products has changed, forever.

Adventures of a Germanophobe

The reunification of Germany has stirred old fears that were buried after the Nazi period. When historian Robert Darnton went to Berlin in 1989, he rediscovered layers of such anti-German fears within himself. He also discovered, as the Wall came down, a changed Germany. East Germans, far from denying their Nazi and communist past, were eager to confront it. The more the Germans challenge their past, Darnton suggests, the less anxious one can be about the German future.

by Robert Darnton

I always wished that the soldier who killed my father had been a German, but he wasn't. He was an American. It didn't even happen in Germany. It happened, in the language of wartime Washington, "somewhere in the Pacific"—actually at the Battle of Buna in Northern New Guinea on October 18, 1942. An American gunner strafed the wrong side by mistake. But I put it right in my mind simply by making it happen in Germany. I was three at the time and didn't know much about geography. Living on the East Coast, I heard about nothing but "bad people" who were all German. They had pencil mustaches, wore their hair smeared diagonally across their foreheads, and walked like geese. In my mind, I arranged it that Hitler himself had killed my father, and in my dreams I saw him coming to get me. He usually came in the window, with a knife between his teeth. I still have Nazi nightmares made up mostly of jackboots and torture chambers. Or do I? Are they really Nazis or some other species of "bad people" picked out of the trash stored in my head—death squads in Argentina, perhaps, or even New York's finest? How can we know what seeps into the mind and settles into memories? How can we assess what we remember?

I had a chance to play with those questions just before I left for Berlin, when I ran across an article I had supposedly written, or rather dictated, at the age of four for the Sunday *New York Times Magazine*: "ROBERT, AGE 4, IN WONDERLAND. What he saw in a tour of Washington is set down here in his own language." My father had been a war correspondent for the *Times*. One of his friends, Meyer Berger, took me around the city and recorded my quasi-baby talk in order to draw a picture of wartime Washington as it appeared to a little boy. It was to be a modern version of the story about "The Emperor's New Clothes," and it made a good Sunday feature because I came up with supposedly cute comments, such as "Penny-gone" for Pentagon.

The cuteness has worn off by now, but I find the article disturbing, because as a four-year-old I apparently spoke the words that appear in it. Meyer Berger, who took them down in shorthand, was famous for

the accuracy and integrity of his reporting. In reading those words printed under the byline "by Robert Darnton as recorded by Meyer Berger," I can know what I said 46 years ago, a year after my father's death. I can step into a stream of consciousness that had disappeared into the lower strata of my mind and dive into a world that had been completely inaccessible—unless I could have reached it by a long and painful detour from a psychoanalyst's couch. Of course, Meyer Berger may have made mistakes, and he may have edited out the most important passages. But how accurate is the note-taking of the psychoanalyst? How unmediated is his contact with experiences stored in other people's minds for half a century?

A few passages from "Robert in Wonderland":

> In the car we passed horses that don't go, and men that don't go (statues in Washington's streets). We saw the house (German Embassy, on Massachusetts Avenue) where the Bad Men lived. The taxicab man said the Bad Men wasn't there. I said: why? and he said they are in the war shooting down houses. A truck tried to pass our car, but it didn't go as fast as each other. I said why didn't they shoot down the Bad Men when they lived here so they wouldn't shoot down the Good Men's Houses?
>
> In the newspaper office I saw a thing (news ticker). It tells how much dead men are killed and how did they get killed and it tells it very quickly and it jumps up and down. It makes a funny noise, Bup-bup-bup-bup, and it goes back so quickly. When it is stopped writing it purrs like a kitten. We got a kitten that purrs. My kitty's name is Patches. It's a she. It just really is....
>
> (Pentagon) The Penny-gone is a big building for cars and for people. Everybody has badges. If they wouldn't have badges Bad People would come. Real soldiers don't live here. They live in War....
>
> (Walter Reed Hospital) Soldiers have to walk with sticks. I saw a soldier in pajamas and the Bad Men cut off his leg and his pajamas too. The Bad Men made these soldiers sick. Maybe his wifes will put his foot on again.
>
> (Arlington Cemetery) It is so quiet here because the good soldiers are asleep. He has to sleep here all the time in the world. If a big tank would come and it could run over that Big Thing (Tomb of the Unknown Soldier) it would wake him.
>
> All these soldiers are covered with little houses but without windows and no doors so they can't come out. So they won't shiver and chilly. This is where the Good Soldiers are.

Now, this is an essay about Germany, not about Robert Darnton. I want to get on with it and to avoid detours into soulful introspection. Yet readers should know that these observations about Germany are made by someone who had looked upon Germans with fear and hatred since before he can remember. For me and millions of others in my generation, Germans are the "Bad People." Many of us tried to shake off this prejudice, but it remained hidden below the threshold of our consciousness—until the fall of 1989. The Peaceful Revolution of 1989 did not just free the Germans from the last vestiges of more than a half-century's dictatorial rule. It freed us from what we thought of them.

When I flew to Germany on August 28, 1989, for a full year of research at the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin, my thoughts were occupied with recollections of three incidents. The first went back to my first trip to Germany, in the summer of 1958. I was visiting an American friend at the University of Tübingen. One night the whole town, or so it seemed, gathered under an enormous tent to sing songs and drink themselves into a stupor. I had never seen grown-ups behave like that as a collective group. They linked elbows and rocked to the rhythm of the beer-hall songs. The girls danced on the tables, while the men grabbed at their dresses. And at midnight, punctually, the place closed down.

Robert Darnton *is Shelby Cullom Davis Professor of European History at Princeton University. He is the author of, among other works,* The Great Cat Massacre *(1985) and* The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History *(1989).* *The first part of this essay serves as the opening section of* Berlin Journal 1989–1990.

Drunken revelers staggered about outside in the dark still clutching their mugs. When they met, they clinked mugs, slapped backs, and bellowed out *"Prost!"* ("Cheers!")

I set out for the student residence, cold sober and feeling as if I had been trapped inside a hellish scene by Brueghel or Bosch. *"Prost!"* called a figure that loomed up out of the dark. My feeble German made it obvious that I came from the United States. *"Amerikaner!"* said the figure, and he began to tell his story.

The "fall" of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marked a euphoric moment between Germany's troubled past and anxieties about its future.

He had known many Americans during the war. He had guarded them, in a camp. One day an officer picked one of them out. "Make that man *kaput!*" he ordered. "What could I do?" The man shrugged his shoulders. Then, weaving on his feet, he put his beer mug down and reached into his pocket. Out came a pack of matches. He lit a match and held it up to the back of his hand. There flickering in the light, I saw an SS tattoo. *"Amerikaner! Brüder!"* He called out, as if all were now forgiven. He extended his tattooed hand and took mine in it. Not knowing what to do, I let him shake my hand and walked off into the night feeling dirtied and sick.

The second episode did not happen to me but to a friend of mine, Suzanne. Like many French Jews, she was sent to a family in the south during the war, and she attended school in her adopted town under a false name, as if she were an ordinary Catholic. When the Germans moved into the unoccupied zone, a detachment of troops took over the town. They paraded past the school every day. To the tiny children, they looked funny in their strange uniforms with their odd way of walking. One day as they marched past, a boy in Suzanne's class pointed his finger at them and laughed. The commanding officer stopped the parade, stood the boy up against the school wall, and had him shot by a firing squad.

For the rest of the war, whenever she saw a group of German soldiers, Suzanne felt an irresistible impulse to laugh. If she spotted them marching through the street, she would run inside her house to a hiding place behind a curtain. Then, she would peer through the window, and as they stomped by, she would bury her face in the material and laugh and laugh and laugh.

The third episode involved my friend Horst. He recounted it to me over coffee in his room under the roof of an ancient building in Wolfenbüttel, the Lower Saxony town where we were both spending the summer as research fellows in the Herzog August Bibliothek. "It's not easy to be called Horst," he began. It took me a minute, but I soon realized he was alluding to Horst Wessel, the Nazi "martyr," who was killed in a brawl in 1930. For the next 15 years sons of Nazis had Horst foisted on them as a name.

By way of explanation, my friend used a four-letter word to describe his father—a petty-minded *petit bourgeois*, who joined the Nazi Party at the first opportunity and threw his weight around as a minor official. On July 20, 1944, Horst, then four or five years old, was traveling with his father and mother in a train. The only other person in their compartment was a man reading a newspaper. After the train pulled into a station, they heard the public address system

announce that there had been an attempt on the Führer's life but that, fortunately, he had escaped unharmed. "Too bad they didn't get the bastard," said the man behind the paper.

Horst's father leaped to his feet. He grabbed the man by the lapels, screaming that he would denounce him to the Gestapo. He could do so easily before the train pulled out, because a Gestapo officer stood just across the platform. But then Horst's mother stood up. She put her hand on Horst's head and shouted at his father: "I swear on the head of this boy that if you do that I will leave you this minute and never come back!" Horst sat there staring at his parents. The man did, too. They were frozen in a silence that seemed to last forever while the father made up his mind. At last he sank back into his seat, the train pulled out, and they all resumed their journey.

Everyone who traveled in Germany during the 1950s and '60s has a collection of such stories. The war touched so many lives that it left its mark everywhere, and anyone who strayed among the ruins would hear horrific tales from survivors with too much on their minds or too much beer in their bellies. But the caricature of the bloated, beery German would not wash by 1989, when I arrived in Germany. By then, I had discovered that I had a great deal in common with the Horsts of my generation—and, besides, other generations had come of age, innocent of any responsibility for Nazism, since they were born after it ended.

What set my generation off from theirs? I asked myself. It was not so much the war as it was a conviction that could be shared by people of my age and cast of mind. Germany represented the Absolute—not the Absolute of Hegelian philosophy, but the only Absolute we could imagine in a world without a God or any clear, transcendent truth: Absolute Evil, the evil of Nazism. Whatever our opinions about politics or ethics or all the other issues we discussed in college bull sessions, we knew that one thing was true: Nazism stood out as a basic point of reference in a landscape composed of endless shades of gray. It was black, pure black, so black that it defined the color of everything around it.

An odd thought to entertain before arriving in Berlin. Was I about to land in the capital of the "evil empire," or was that idea as empty as Ronald Reagan's rhetoric about the Soviet Union? I looked down trying to locate the spot where Hitler's bunker had existed, and I tightened my safety belt.

* * *

Now, looking back on my arrival in Berlin in September 1989, I get a dizzying sense of time spinning out of control. The East Germans had been preparing to celebrate the 40th anniversary of their separate state on the other side of the Wall, and I arrived on a wave of celebrations for the bicentennial of the French Revolution. As a historian of the 18th century, I had spent the summer toasting the fall of the Bastille. The East Germans were beginning to build the reviewing stands where Eric Honecker and Mikhail Gorbachev would preside over a victory march in honor of the triumph of socialism. The era 1949–1989 seemed to fit within the larger span of 1789–1989. By marking off the rise of democracy and socialism, the two time frames reinforced the East German way of piecing together the past.

But within a few weeks everything came apart, and the past suddenly looked problematic. Instead of congratulating Honecker, Gorbachev warned him that, "He who comes too late will be punished by history" (or, in some of the reported versions, "by life"). Gorbachev's remarks on October 7 were taken as a sign that the people could demonstrate in the streets without being gunned down. The demonstrations precipitated the resignation of Honecker (October 18), the collapse of the government (November 7) and the Politburo (November 8), and finally the "fall" of the Wall (November 9). By opening the Wall, the East German authorities, or what remained of them, heralded the end of the Cold War and therefore of East Germany as a separate state. Instead of celebrating the birth of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), they brought about its death.

Like everyone in Berlin, I had a giddy sense of living through historic moments. But I did not at first appreciate what that experience meant to the East Germans.

They did not merely make history; they also had to unmake it—that is, to strip off the orthodoxies that defined the meaning of their country by confronting an unfamiliar, unappealing past. They had been told that West Germany harbored Nazis, while East Germany stood for everything good—"anti-fascistic humanism" in GDR-speak. But after November 9, they came to see themselves as heirs to a common German past and as victims of a peculiarly East European-type police state.

Perhaps I should have been prepared for such a fundamental adjustment of world-view, but it took me by surprise. Despite my historical training, or perhaps because of it, I had unknowingly fallen into the notion of history as something that happens in the classroom, something between professors and students. In East Germany it was happening in the streets, and ordinary people were taking charge of it. While observing it in the streets, I often came upon posters announcing public discussions of "Blank Spots in GDR History." On December 13, 1989, I went to one of those debates, something between a town meeting and a rap session sponsored by a citizens' movement in a working-class neighborhood of East Berlin. I expected to hear declamations against the suppression of the uprisings in East Germany in 1953, in Budapest in 1956, and in Prague in 1968. Those subjects did arise, but the people at the meeting, ordinary citizens from different walks of life, were more intent on challenging the general pattern in the official version of their past. Above all, they were angry. They turned on two professors who had tried to lecture them on the origins of the GDR. Why should East Germany be identified with the Left and West Germany with the Right? they asked. The history of the GDR was really the history of Stalinism, and the professors had perpetuated it. What distinguished Stalinism from fascism? Both were built on the secret police. What differentiated Right from Left? The key dimension in history was above and below—and the professors, like all the apparatchiks, saw things from above. The protesters wanted "true" history, a history of the people, written at street level, full of unvarnished facts, and free of party lines.

As a history professor myself, I had doubts about the self-evidence of facts. But I was impressed by the sight of people arguing passionately about their past. History matters everywhere in Eastern Europe, because people feel a need to come to terms with the past before they can get their bearings in the present—and the past is littered with "blank spots," factual gaps created by the old regimes' unwillingness to confront their own iniquities. One of the first demands of Solidarity, when it reached an agreement with the Polish government in August 1980, was for a "new" history—a "true" history, which would not mince facts but tell the truth about everything inflicted on Poland, from the partitions of the 18th century to the Hitler-Stalin Pact, the massacre at Katyn, and the Red Army's complicity in the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising in 1945.

The history of East Germany, however, is another story. One of the first acts of the East German parliament elected on March 18, 1990—in the first free election held in East Germany since 1933—was the following resolution:

> The first freely chosen parliament of the GDR admits, in the name of the citizens of this country, its share in the responsibility for the humiliation, persecution, and murder of Jewish men, women, and children. We feel sadness and shame and acknowledge this burden of German history.

A curious way to begin a new regime—not with a declaration of independence, as in America in 1776, but with a declaration of guilt. This theme could be found everywhere in East Germany in 1989 and 1990, especially in the speeches of the new prime minister, Lothar de Maziere: "There is a great deal of history to be worked over in Germany.... Germany is our inheritance of historical debts and historical guilt."

The issue arose because the Holocaust was the biggest blank spot in East German history. The authorities of the GDR had denied any responsibility for the extermination of Jews on the grounds that as Communists they, too, had been victims of Hitlerism. After coming to power, they had de-Nazified with a vengeance, while their counterparts in West Germany permitted former Nazis into positions at almost every level of government.

But after the Communists were ousted from the GDR, the situation looked less simple. The new East German authorities acknowledged that guilt existed on both sides of the border, and when they erased the border, they accepted their part in the common German past. They underwent reunification by guilt, not merely by subscribing to the West German Constitution. Even then they discovered ambiguities. To sort things out, they felt compelled to dig the past up—literally.

In March 1990, two historians unearthed a mass burial site near the former concentration camp of Fünfeichen. After conquering East Germany in 1945, the Soviets had herded suspected Nazis into the same camps that the Nazis had used for their own victims. Many of the Germans were innocent. Many died of starvation and disease, and the Soviets dumped them in unmarked graves. Forty years later, when the Soviet threat had disappeared, the East Germans began to dig the bodies up, first at Fünfeichen, then at 10 other camps, including the most terrible of all: Sachsenhausen, Bautzen, and Buchenwald. The victims of Stalinism lay in the same earth as the victims of Nazism, in the foulest corners of European history.

While they uncovered those crimes, the East Germans raked over more recent abuses of the police state. After occupying the offices of their own secret police (Stasi), they had come upon 100 kilometers of files covering six million citizens. In 1985 Honecker had launched a program to produce a computerized file for every person in the GDR, and the Stasi had accumulated enough material to compromise a large proportion of the country's 16 million inhabitants. The citizens' committees that took over the Stasi headquarters tried to keep the records under lock and key, but enough leaked out to incriminate a whole string of politicians who had taken the lead in the East German revolution.

According to information released by the caretaker government on January 15, 1990, at least one of every 40 adults was a paid agent of the Stasi. According to information obtained by *Der Spiegel*, one of every 10 deputies to the East German parliament elected on March 18 had collaborated with the Stasi in one way or other—and they included Lothar de Maziere, who as prime minister had called upon the East Germans to confront their "historical guilt" by taking up the burden of the past.

Which past? The East Germans found it difficult to distinguish between phenomena that once had seemed to occupy opposite poles on the ideological spectrum. They did not identify the police state of Honecker with the police state of Hitler, but they saw nuances where they once had seen opposites. The banners carried in the demonstrations expressed their new sense of shading: "Stalinism-Stasinism" and "Stasi-Nazi."

The succession of police states means that nearly everyone has a place on some secret list, either as a denunciator or a suspect. By digging through the last 57 years of their history, the East Germans encountered nothing solid on which they could construct a collective identity. They had nowhere to go, except West Germany. In choosing absorption in the West, they did not simply vote to join a consumer society. They identified with a republic that had managed its affairs successfully for 40 years and had come to terms with its Nazi past by open, often acrimonious debate, rather than by denial and repression.

Where did exposure to the torment of East Germany leave a self-confessed Germanophobe? I tried to understand the East Germans, not to judge them. In marching next to them in their demonstrations, listening to them in their political debates, dancing with them on their Wall, and accompanying them on the rounds of their daily business—in workshops, pubs, and provincial town halls—I could not help but sympathize with their attempts to cope with a cruel regime. Of course, the East Germans had made that regime themselves, with help from the Red Army. But when the Red Army withdrew, they unmade it. I did not know which to admire more, their courage in defying the state or their self-restraint when they destroyed it.

Also, like any traveler in a foreign land, I did not encounter the population in the abstract and en masse. I met individuals. They were ordinary people, not heroic and not particularly political, just fed up with the system. When the opportunity arose,

they took to the streets in protest, but mostly they went about their business, whether it was repairing cars or censoring books. What will become of them now?

The jokes that I enjoyed in Werner Hartwig's body shop about the East German car, the Trabi, have now worn thin. The Trabi itself is extinct, so Werner can no longer perform miracles on wrecks, amputating and transplanting parts according to the principle of "out of two make one." Can he remake his East Berlin shop in order to practice surgery on Mercedes?

The two censors I interviewed, Hans-Jurgen Wegener and Christina Horn, face more serious unemployment, because censorship no longer exists, nor does literature itself as that peculiar system for producing and diffusing the printed word within a "command economy." Now that the book trade is driven by the literary marketplace, nearly all the writers, editors, and publishers I met are headed for the bread line. Like the censors themselves, they do not know how to make their way in the strange, new system of Western literature.

The professors seem equally disoriented. No one in Leipzig pines for the Department of Marxism and Leninism at the top of the 27-story high-rise that the Communists built on the ruins of the medieval university. But almost every week I receive a letter from Leipzig or Halle or Berlin, worrying that the Academy of Sciences is being dissolved or that the universities have no budgets or that professors must undergo ideological-professional examinations, conducted by colleagues from the West.

I worry less about Annemarie and Christoph Muller, the pastors who took charge of the revolution in the little village of Laucha in Thuringia. After mobilizing their entire community and driving the local Stasi agents into "early retirement," they managed to get a member of New Forum, the citizens' movement, elected mayor. At the height of the excitement in October and November 1989, they even filled their church. The congregation may have prayed most fervently to be delivered from the Stasi, but, for the first time in their lives, the Mullers saw their church full. Now it is an empty shell once more, a monument to more prosperous times in the 16th century, and the congregation is reduced to a few old women.

The flaming words of 1989, like those of 1789, have vanished in the air. The fire has gone out of East Germany, and a burnt-out, morning-after sense of sobriety hangs over the land. The East Germans think of the day care, low rents, and full employment (with part-time labor) guaranteed them by their former masters. They look for the economic miracle and see a mirage. But no one I know laments the old regime.

I learned enough last year to distrust my power as a prophet; but whatever the future holds for the former German Democratic Republic, I think one can be sure that it will be free from tapped phones and steamed-open letters and spies extending from kindergarten to the assembly line. The East Germans have survived their double exposure to places like Buchenwald. Now, for the first time in 57 years, they no longer live under the shadow of the secret police. They have shaken off the last vestiges of totalitarianism, and they have learned to face their past.

If the East Germans can look backward without blinking, they should be able to look forward with some confidence. And we should do the same. Instead of reviving old fears, the reunification of Germany should put them to rest. The Nazi-Stasi Germany is gone. The new Germany offers a way out of the 20th century and an opportunity to say with more assurance than our fathers at the century's beginning: *Good-bye to all that*!

Continued from page 18

opment at the New York Times Company. As a result, they are reshaping their newspapers to give readers the "news" they are thought to want, rather than the news they might be thought to need. "News is what our readers say it is," the *Wausau* (Wis.) *Daily Herald*'s managing editor told his shocked staff.

"The new reader-friendly journalism," writes Stepp, a journalism professor at the University of Maryland, "elevates lifestyle issues, local 'chicken-dinner' items and almost anything relevant to young people and baby boomers, and downplays items perceived as boring, particularly routine government coverage." At the *Orange County* (Calif.) *Register*, reporters' "beats" now include shopping malls and the car culture. At the Rochester, N.Y. *Democrat and Chronicle*, the editor admitted, "We're not as nose-to-the-grindstone on City Hall and the county legislature.... [We] still cover them, but [not] in the nitty-gritty way we used to." And the *Wausau Daily Herald*'s managing editor, Steve Crosby, says coverage of government has been re-

Covering the War

A Survey of Recent Articles

Almost no one, it seems, is entirely happy about American journalism's coverage of the Persian Gulf War—*except* the Bush administration and the U.S. military, the Cable News Network (CNN), and, from all evidence, the American public. "[The] most powerful images of this war were of triumphant technology," Daniel Hallin of the University of California complains in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (May 1991). The potent images—and perhaps the reaction at home—would have been quite different, he points out, "if the cameras [had been] on the ground, where the bombs landed." Yet, he adds, that is seldom possible in "a technological war, especially one in which most of the dying is on one side."

Even so, according to the Center for Media and Public Affairs' *Media Monitor* (Apr. 1991), the images most often televised on the major networks' evening news shows from Jan. 17 to Feb. 27 were of "damage and injuries inflicted on civilians," in Iraq and elsewhere. The center counted 1,217 individual camera shots of civilian damage—almost 30 a night. Nearly one in five were of human casualties.

It was precisely so that he could tell viewers about civilian casualties that Iraqi authorities permitted CNN's Peter Arnett to remain in Baghdad for weeks after the first bombs fell on Jan. 17—as the veteran correspondent himself later acknowledged. *New York Times* TV critic Walter Goodman writes in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (May–June 1991) that Arnett's reports "never contradicted the Iraqi line."

Yet, skeptical or not, reports from the enemy's capital were only a limited part of journalism's war story. The overall coverage, according to critics such as Hallin, reflected the U.S. military's effort to "manage" the media in much the same way a modern presidential candidate and his aides do—"releasing carefully controlled doses of information, setting up carefully planned photo opportunities, and minimizing reporters' access to any other source of information." The public did not seem to mind. A Times Mirror survey in late January, cited in *Columbia Journalism Review* (Mar.–Apr. 1991), indicated that eight in 10 Americans approved of the war coverage—and nearly six in 10 said the military should put even *tighter* restrictions on the press.

Journalists chafed under the constraints of the pool system, which had been worked out last year by the Pentagon with the cooperation of major news organizations. It "encouraged the most docile sort of pack journalism," charges Peter Schmeisser in the *New Republic* (Mar. 18, 1991). "Only 160 reporters were allowed near the front lines, and these had to travel in groups... with military public affairs officers close behind. The most gripping reports came from correspondents who violated ground rules and hitched up with Egyptian or Saudi units."

Not all news organizations were upset about the coverage. When the major TV networks "lost their communications links from Baghdad in those crucial first hours, CNN was able to keep its line open and crackling with reports" from Arnett and colleagues, notes Patrick Mott in the *Quill* (Mar. 1991). The dramatic feat elevated CNN's status, but did not do

duced so much that "the mayor calls and complains."

"Reader-focused journalism" has been taken up as a cause at the Knight-Ridder chain's 29 dailies. "I've never heard so many editors talking about readers, thinking about readers . . . ," said Jennie Buckner, vice president for news. "It doesn't mean dumbing down. It means a stronger push for clarity." Readers want much more than clarity, however. One study of 450 readers found that they generally deemed articles boring unless they had a prior interest in the subject.

Editors such as John Walter of the *Atlanta* (Ga.) *Journal* and *Constitution* pooh-pooh claims that newspapers are being dumbed down and argue that highfalutin journalists just lost touch with everyday concerns. Starting in the late 1960s, newspapers moved away from the interests of their readers, Walter said. "Stories lengthened. Attitudes toward stories changed. And we . . . became so convinced of our mission to save the world and comment soberly on it that we veered away from

much to help viewers understand the war.

For the rival news divisions of ABC, NBC, and CBS, writes Jon Katz, former executive producer of the *CBS Morning News*, in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (Mar.–Apr. 1991), the war proved, despite soaring ratings, "an economic as well as editorial disaster." The cost of covering the war skyrocketed, while advertisers, "unwilling to associate their products with war, defected in droves." The radical conclusion was clear, in Katz's view: The major networks "can't afford to be in the breaking news business anymore."

Newspapers could not hope to match the drama of the early television coverage, but they launched a strong effort to compensate with bountiful graphics, "sidebar" stories, explanatory pieces—and perspective. The *New York Times* began to display "the same breadth and authority" that it had in covering the revolution in Eastern Europe in 1989, comments Peter Braestrup, director of communications at the Library of Congress (and *WQ* founding editor), in the *New Republic* (Feb. 11, 1991). By the second week of the war, writes the *Washington Journalism Review*'s Thomas J. Colin (Mar. 1991), it appeared to many observers "that newspapers, with their well-rounded, graphic packages, had decisively recaptured the story from television."

"WE GO NOW TO DHAHRAN FOR AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT ABOUT AN UNSUBSTANTIATED RUMOR REGARDING A POSSIBLE IRAQI ATTACK ON AN UNSPECIFIED TARGET. . . ."

Yet supplying readers with genuine perspective on the war was far from easy. Pentagon restrictions were only part of the problem. Many young journalists had no prior military experience. "They're all bright [and] energetic enough, but this [for them] is like landing on Mars," Braestrup, a veteran Vietnam war correspondent, told Richard Valeriani in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (Mar.–Apr. 1991). Ignorant also of history, the reporters concentrated on "high-tech stories" or else on "'boo-hoo journalism,' that is, asking, How do you feel? not What do you know?"

The military, however, harbored its own illusions, as Braestrup also notes. "A lot of the military are living a myth—that TV news had a decisive effect [on] public support for the war in Vietnam." Public opinion surveys conducted during the Korean and Vietnam wars indicate otherwise. "In Korea, you had censorship and no TV. In Vietnam, you had [TV and no censorship]. Public support for each war fell at roughly the same rate."

Nevertheless, the Vietnam myth left "today's officer corps [with] a loathing for the press," retired Marine Lt. Gen. Bernard E. Trainor, a former *New York Times* military correspondent, writes in *Parameters* (Dec. 1990). But "the roots of the tension are in the nature of the institutions." Both the military and the free press are essential to national well-being, but "the problem of minimizing the natural friction between the two is a daunting one." And, one might add, is likely to remain so.

what we had." Reporters and editors, he said, used to be "of the public. But we got overeducated and forgot. Now, with embarrassment, with little apologetic titters, we're gathering up the courage to go back."

Critics, however, decry the trend. "You might as well not have newspapers if you can't give people the news they need to live full decent lives," Columbia University journalism professor Melvin Mencher said. Editors "taking these paths, in a democratic society, are [not] giving people the news they need to give informed consent."

The publishers and editors who are trying to give the public what they think it wants are hoping that their newspapers thus will become more vital to readers. But, Stepp observes, the danger is that as newspapers provide less and less real news, people may find the newspapers even more dispensable.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

New Age Nonsense

"The New Age Movement: No Effort, No Truth, No Solutions" by Christopher Lasch, in *New Oxford Review* (Apr. 1991), 1069 Kains Ave., Berkeley, Calif. 94706.

The New Age movement "invites a mixture of ridicule and indignant alarm," University of Rochester historian Christopher Lasch observes, but the discontents it addresses are "supremely important"—and hence deserve a better response than the New Age one.

The movement's central teaching is "that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as it works for you." Actress-author Shirley MacLaine and other New Age enthusiasts have whipped up an eclectic mix of meditation, positive thinking, faith healing, environmentalism, mysticism, acupuncture, astrology, extrasensory perception, spiritualism, vegetarianism, organic gardening, ancient mythologies, chiropractic, herbal medicine, and other ingredients.

But something vital is missing, Lasch contends. While the New Age concoction may occasionally provide temporary spiritual relief, it "cannot bring about the equivalent of a religious conversion, a real change of heart . . . [or] even an intellectual conversion to a new point of view capable of standing up against rigorous questioning." What is missing, he says, is "spiritual discipline—submission to a body of teachings that has to be accepted even when it conflicts with immediate interests or inclinations and [that] cannot constantly be redesigned to individual specifications." Genuine religion, by contrast with the New Age substitute, aims to produce not inner peace so much as "a sense of falling short of an absolute ethical ideal," with the result being "as much spiritual discomfort and even anguish as emotional security."

Nevertheless, the "intuition" underlying the New Age movement must be taken seriously, Lasch says. This intuition is "that mankind has lost the collective knowledge of how to live with dignity and grace; that this knowledge includes a respect not just for nature but for the nurturant activities our society holds in such low esteem; and that man's future depends on a renewal of prematurely discarded traditions of thought and practice. Those traditions [provided] answers to old questions about the meaning and purpose of human life, questions our own society has unwisely chosen to ignore as either unanswerable or unimportant (or both)."

Lasch argues that the New Age movement is best understood as a revival of the second-century heresy of gnosticism—"the belief that the material world was created by evil deities and that salvation lies in the soul's escape from the flesh into the spiritual realm whence it came." The New Age version, however, is "considerably

adulterated . . . and mixed up with imagery derived from science fiction—flying saucers, extraterrestrial intervention in human history, escape from the earth to a new home in space."

The New Age movement is to gnosticism, Lasch says, what fundamentalism is to Christianity. "Both rest on a therapeutic view of religion, a belief in its immediate power to produce health and peace of mind . . . . The question is not whether New Age therapies really work but whether religion ought to be reduced to therapy. If it offers nothing more than a spiritual high, religion becomes another drug in a drug-ridden society." Yet a "more rigorous" version of gnosticism is not the solution. "[The] only corrective to the ersatz religions of the New Age," he concludes, "is to turn to the real thing."

Divorce from the West

"The Islamic World and the Latin West, 1350–1500" by Archibald R. Lewis, in *Speculum* (Oct. 1990), Medieval Acad. of America, 1430 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

When did today's split between the Islamic world and the West occur? During the 14th and 15th centuries, said the late University of Massachusetts historian Lewis. The attitudes "that these two great world civilizations formed" then toward each other "still govern much of how they interact today." By the mid-14th century, while Western Europe was falling on hard times (with the Black Death, economic depression, the Hundred Years War, and pervasive loss of confidence in the papacy), the Muslim world was starting to emerge from a difficult era of its own. In the decades that followed, Islamic strength and confidence returned, and there was an extremely important religious revival.

The Muslim world had been all but torn apart in the 13th century by the expansion of a crusading Latin Europe and the attacks of Mongol armies. But the clouds gradually lifted after the mid-14th century. Slave armies the Muslims created proved able to defeat the Mongols in battle. And Ottoman sultans from Asia Minor crossed into Europe and within decades controlled most of the Balkans. A major European crusade in 1396 to check this menace was repelled. Constantinople, the thousand-year-old Christian capital, fell to the Ottomans in 1453. The Muslim world stretched from North Africa to Southeast Asia.

But even more important than the Muslims' new military strength, Lewis said, was a religious revival. Muslim religious law (*Shari'a*), "interpreted by legal scholars known as *ulema* in courts throughout the entire Islamic world, came to govern every aspect of [Muslims'] lives." The growth of Sufi mysticism, which "dealt with the hearts," also strengthened Islam. And schisms ceased to divide Muslims after 1350, as orthodox Sunni Islam largely prevailed. But the new religious ardor, Lewis noted, was "hostile to [the] philosophical and speculative thought that had been the glory of . . . medieval Islam."

Meanwhile, in the West, despite many conflicts and difficulties, "much that was hopeful also was at work." A new capitalism was stirring, the nation-state appeared, and vital institutions such as the medieval town came into existence. The number of universities increased fivefold between 1300 and 1500. And scientific progress continued, "laying the basis for the [modern] secular intellectual world."

As Latin Europe thus prepared itself "for its world role in a way that was to be more effective than that of its Islamic neighbors," a divorce between the two great cultures took place. Much of the blame, in Lewis's view, "rests on the Islamic side where, after 1350, all Western European influences, except military technologies, were rejected." But much blame, he said, also rests with Western Europe, which "closed itself off from the same Islamic culture it had earlier found so stimulating . . . . Western Europeans were to advance into the wider world, separated from and hostile to the culture of the great Islamic civilization nearby. And this was to remain so for centuries to come."

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Science 101

"Tune In, Turn Off, Drop Out" by John S. Rigden and Sheila Tobias, in *The Sciences* (Jan.–Feb. 1991), New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Every year nearly 500,000 students graduate from high school and go on to college with the intention of majoring in science or engineering. But every year only 200,000 college students complete one of those majors. After taking introductory science courses, most of the students initially oriented toward science change their minds. Meanwhile, of the undergraduates who do stay with science and graduate, only about 10,000 go on to earn doctorates—too few, according to some specialists, to sustain the U.S. economy's technological base.

The students who renounce the study of science in college are usually assumed to lack the capacity for it. "Certainly many who abandon science are better off in other disciplines," acknowledge Rigden, of the American Institute of Physics in New York, and Tobias, author of *Overcoming Math Anxiety* (1978). "But what about those who start off with both a taste for science and the necessary aptitude but choose, after a semester or two, not to go on?" College science programs, they argue, should try to keep such able students.

To find out where the introductory science courses go wrong, Tobias had a classics professor and graduate students in literature and philosophy take some basic university physics and chemistry courses. Although most of them did well on the tests, they were put off. Instructors were reluctant to present the intellectual or historical background of the material being taught. The classics professor, who was taking chemistry, wanted to learn "more of the background of Dalton's laws in ancient atomic theory and of the work done on gas laws during the 18th century." Instead, the instructor kept working sample problems "hour after uncomfortable hour."

The instructors were not necessarily unaware of their courses' unappealing aspects. A chemistry professor said that the material "is dull to learn, and it is dull to teach. Unfortunately, it is the basic nuts and bolts stuff that must be mastered before anything useful can be accomplished." The students, another professor said, are assumed to be already decided on scientific careers. The usual grading system, which severely rations top marks, fosters an obsession with grades among science students, and further obscures the intellectual appeal of the sciences.

"Undoubtedly there is a core of committed young people who are unshaken by classroom competition, relentless problem solving and the neglect of intellectual context," Rigden and Tobias write. But to hold the others, something different is needed: Smaller classes with less competition and more discussion. Instructors should consider adding lessons in intellectual history. "Basic science," they conclude, "must become a rigorous adventure instead of a catechism."

Altered States

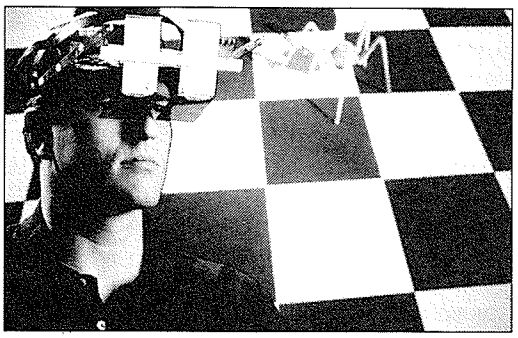
"Computer-Created World of 'Virtual Reality' Opening New Vistas to Scientists" by David L. Wheeler, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Mar. 13, 1991), 1255 23rd St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037; "It's Been Real" by Sallie Tisdale, in *Esquire* (Apr. 1991), 1790 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019.

"You can take a stroll on an insect's eye or take a tour of an integrated circuit," boasts Thomas A. Furness, talking about the delights awaiting the visitor to computer-generated worlds of "virtual reality." Furness, director of the University of Washington's

Human Interface Technology Laboratory, and other researchers hope that such travel to imaginary realms will "open up new intellectual vistas in education, entertainment, art, and architecture, as well as in science," reports Wheeler, an assistant editor at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. But journalist Tisdale suggests there may be a darker side to such "trips."

To journey to a virtual world, as Wheeler describes one simple version of today's technology, a person dons goggles, a helmet, and a glove with fiber-optic cables. Before his eyes appear computer-generated images. "The picture in front of each eye . . . is slightly different, creating the illusion of three dimensions." An electromagnetic field is generated around him, and wires running from his helmet let the computer know where his head is in the field. "As the user's head moves, the computer adjusts the view being projected in the goggles to what the user would be seeing from the new stance inside the virtual reality." The user can "fly" simply by pointing with his gloved hand.

Variations on virtual-reality technology already have been used to help physicians position beams of radiation for cancer therapy and to aid biochemists seeking to attach drugs to protein molecules. But virtual-reality researchers have more exalted goals in mind. One scientist told Wheeler that the technology's main aim should be to take people to "absolutely unreal" places. He envisions, for instance, people acting as variables in mathematical equations and watching forms, colors, or curves shift around them in response to changes in the variable's value.



Wearing head-mounted apparatus, a researcher at the University of North Carolina enters the computer-generated world of "virtual reality."

Today's technology is still earthbound, however. "Virtual reality as an experience . . . is more like going to the movies than going to a new world," Tisdale reports. The phrase *virtual reality*, she says, "is too clever by half for the technology itself. But it reflects the fantasy of its makers: the dream of making worlds, of visiting environments and living inside stories without leaving the living room." And such prospects have aroused some fears.

Jaron Lanier, founder of VPL Research, and others, she writes, "talk of wanting to live outside limitations, to live in a world in which even the laws of physics are designed to one's liking. The connection to [the] drug culture, both as source material and adjunct, is unmistakable . . . . There is no doubt that the proponents of virtual reality imagine this technology creating a culture just as powerful." That, Tisdale warns, could turn out to be a "bad trip."

Tumblin' Pest

"Tumbleweed" by James A. Young, in *Scientific American* (Mar. 1991), 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Thanks to Hollywood westerns and Zane Grey novels, tumbleweed has come to be an evocative symbol of the Old West in all its romantic glory. But in the real West, writes Young, of the U.S. Agricultural Research Service, the weed did not appear until the late 1870s and then it became "the scourge of the frontier." As the wind witch (just one of the names settlers had for it) spread uncontrollably across the northern Great Plains, it caused "sudden agricultural havoc."

To farmers, tumbleweed was anything but romantic. Its sharp, spiny leaves penetrated the leather gloves worn by men threshing grain and cut their hands. More

important, tumbleweeds cut the legs of horses working in infested fields. "Because the horse was the basic source of power for preparing fields and harvesting and transporting grain on prairie farms, any threat to the horses was a threat to the existence of homestead agriculture," Young notes. As the obnoxious weed tumbled across the Plains in the 1880s and '90s, the agricultural threat it presented was so serious that many worried farmers abandoned their houses and fields.

Tumbleweed first arrived in the West about 1877, on a farm in South Dakota. It was an accidental import from southern Russia. Seeds of the plant had apparently been mixed in with flax seed brought over from Europe. Once here, the Russian thistle (as U.S. Agriculture Department botanists called it) thrived on the open plains.

The tumbleweed could not have competed successfully with the Plains' native tall prairie grasses. But during the last decades of the 19th century, wheat farming spread rapidly across the eastern part of the northern Great Plains, encouraged by railroad expansion and the development of portable, steam-powered grain threshers. "The destruction of the native prairie grasses enabled the thistle to exploit an ecological niche," Young notes.

Farmers themselves also helped the wind witch to spread. They often unwittingly sowed Russian thistle seeds along with their crop seeds, and grain shipments by railroad were contaminated. "In addition," Young writes, "the same steam threshermen who so disliked the spiny weed frequently did not thoroughly clean their machines and so dispersed the seeds as they traveled from farm to farm."

By about the turn of the century, the weed had tumbled all the way to the Pacific coast. Early eradication efforts failed—the infestation was too extensive. Not until World War II did scientists develop herbicides that finally ended the wind witch's pesky career.

RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Security?

"Environment and Security: Muddled Thinking" by Daniel Deudney, in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (Apr. 1991), Educational Foundation for Nuclear Science, 6042 S. Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60637.

Iraq's intentional oil spills and bombing of Kuwait's oil wells during the Persian Gulf War dramatized the destructive impact warfare can have on the environment. Jessica Tuchman Mathews, vice president of the World Resources Institute, and other analysts have suggested broadening the concept of U.S. "national security" to take into account such environmental hazards. Deudney, a Fellow at Princeton's Center for Energy and Environmental Studies, strongly objects.

Despite what happened in the Persian Gulf, he points out, "most environmental degradation is not caused by war [or] preparation for war." Threats to environmental well-being and threats to national security from violence are very different, he argues. "Both may kill people and may reduce human well-being, but not all threats to life and property are threats to security . . . . If everything that causes a decline in human well-being is labeled a security threat, the term loses any analytical usefulness."

Most environmental degradation, Deudney observes, is "largely unintentional, the side effect of many other activities." And nothing about the environmental problem is particularly "national" in character. "Few environmental threats afflict just one nation, and many altogether ignore national borders." Nor are most environmental threats simply "international," since there are perpetrators and victims in the same country. With respect to environ-

mental degradation, then, there just "is nothing distinctively national about the causes, harms, or solutions."

Attempts to link environmental threats with national security, Deudney notes, may partly stem from a desire to have people respond to those threats with a sense of urgency. And it is true, he says, that "the national security mentality engenders an enviable sense of urgency, and a corresponding willingness to accept great personal sacrifice. Unfortunately, these emotions may be difficult to sustain." Cycles of alarm and complacency are not likely "to establish permanent patterns of environmentally sound behavior, and 'crash' solutions are often bad ones." For example, he says, the energy crisis of the 1970s "spawned such white elephants as the proposed synfuels program, the 'energy mobilization board,' and a Byzantine system of price controls."

"Intense nationalism" Deudney maintains, directly conflicts with a sensible environmental outlook. "Thinking of the environment as a national security problem risks undercutting the sense of world community and common fate that may be necessary to solve the [environmental] problem."

Swamp Monster

"The Swamp Thing" by Rick Henderson, in *Reason* (Apr. 1991), Reason Foundation, 2716 Ocean Park Blvd., Ste. 1062, Santa Monica, Calif. 90405.

When the Carter administration set out in 1977 to combat destruction of U.S. wetlands, there was not much question about what lands were to be protected. *Wetlands* were areas so often flooded or saturated with ground water that they would normally support "vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions." Only "aquatic areas"—swamps, marshes, and bogs—qualified. And they deserved protection. Wetlands are home to about one-third of the animals on the endangered species list, and they also reduce flood damage, act as natural filters for ground water, and check soil erosion. But during the 1980s, the federal government vastly expanded its definition. Now, says Henderson, assistant managing editor of *Reason*, most of the eastern United States and two-fifths of drought-stricken California qualify as "wetlands."

The definition's enlargement occurred when guidelines developed by the Army Corps of Engineers to help distinguish between plants that grow in wet soils and those that grow in dry soils, evolved into the 126-page *Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands*. Instead of being defined by the functions they performed, wetlands came to be defined by "technical factors": the soil's wetness, its chemical properties, and the varieties of plants that grow in it. "Theoretically, land is supposed to meet . . . three criteria before it's declared a wetland," Henderson notes, "but the burden of proof is on the landowner. And the parameters are extremely elastic." Land that is inundated for just one week a year, for example, is now deemed a wetland.

Bernard Goode, who helped develop the wetlands manual, told Henderson that each agency involved in developing the new definition made it as broad as possible. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service, for instance, included soils moist enough to impede crop growth—but not necessarily saturated or flooded—as wetland soils. And the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Henderson says, "insisted that facultative vegetation—plant life which *by definition* appears in uplands as often as in wetlands—be included as a wetland-defining parameter."

The broad definition of wetlands makes the job of environmental regulators easier. But if the definition is strictly followed, Henderson warns, it "will make millions of acres of private property unusable and require huge tax-dollar payouts to compensate property owners." One real-estate developer whose property was designated a wetland was awarded $2.6 million in compensation last year.

ARTS & LETTERS

The Mozart Myth

"Mozart: The Myth and The Reality" by Gregory Hayes, in *Humanities* (Mar.–Apr. 1991), National Endowment for the Humanities, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506.

In the Oscar-winning 1984 film *Amadeus*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91) was made out to be a silly genius, in dramatic contrast to his rival Antonio Salieri, a pious mediocrity. The portrayal, writes Hayes, a pianist and harpsichordist, was only the latest variant of the mythic Mozart, a popular creation that has overshadowed the man known to scholars.

According to German historian Volkmar Braunbehrens, says Hayes, the real Mozart did not even use the name Amadeus. He "used simply Amadé (or Amadeo), in an attempt to translate his baptismal name Theophilus (*Gottlieb*, or 'love of God')," he wrote. "It is therefore quite appropriate that the theater and cinema associate themselves with the name 'Amadeus,' thereby announcing that they want nothing to do with Mozart's actual life."

The mythic Mozart, established soon after his death and embellished by writers and composers ever since, is, Hayes notes, "the child genius and youthful virtuoso who, after brilliant early success in Vienna, was spurned by a philistine world of jealous peers who somehow conspired to engineer his early death" at age 35 in 1791.

The last year of Mozart's life provided the mythmakers with fertile material. The composer was deeply in debt, and in the summer of 1791, a stranger commissioned the *Requiem Mass* from him under mysterious circumstances. Franz Xaver Niemetschek, an early biographer (1798), told how Mozart was visited by an unknown messenger, bearing an unsigned letter from an unidentified patron. Niemetschek said that the ailing Mozart later came to feel that he was writing the *Requiem* for himself and that he had somehow been poisoned.

The mysterious patron's identity was long a staple of Mozart biographies, but modern scholars have determined that he was Count Franz Walsegg-Stuppach, an eccentric music lover. Although there is little evidence to support the notion that Mozart was poisoned, rumors circulated in Salieri's lifetime that *he* had thus done in his rival. Aleksandr Pushkin in 1830 wrote a play about the murderer Salieri, and Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov turned it into an opera. More recently, in *Amadeus*, playwright and screenwriter Peter Shaffer had Salieri force Mozart to dictate the *Requiem* to him until his rival at last expired from exhaustion. In reality, however, Salieri was not even present at the deathbed.

Tom Hulce's Amadeus *portrayal of Mozart conducting "belies both the historical evidence (Mozart would in all likelihood have been seated at a keyboard) and the art of conducting," Hayes writes.*

Despite the skewed portrayals, scholarly investiga-

Broadway's Last Curtain?

Thomas M. Disch, the *Nation*'s theater critic, writes an obituary for Broadway in the *Atlantic* (Mar. 1991).

In the '90s . . . the Great White Way [is destined] to become a graveyard for great white elephants, as, one by one, the 36 theaters left in the Broadway area find themselves unable to attract either shows or audiences.

Those who feel a professional obligation to contradict the handwriting on the wall—theater owners, producers, and press agents—can cite cheery statistics. The League of American Theatres and Producers announced [in June 1990] that for the third year in a row Broadway set box-office records, with $283 million in ticket sales. However, this record reflects not dramatically increased attendance but only higher ticket prices—as high as $55 or $60 for musicals . . . . In the 1967–1968 season 58 shows opened on Broadway: 44 nonmusical plays . . . and 14 musicals. The 1989–1990 season yielded 35 shows [including] 21 nonmusical plays (six of them revivals) and 12 musicals (four of them revivals) . . . . Musicals seem to be holding their own, but clearly 'legit' drama . . . is an endangered species . . . .

Now, except among the rich, a night on the town has become a once-a-year extravagance, a fact reflected in the strength of Broadway musicals relative to plays . . . . After all, people can see actors on TV any night of the week; they can read a good story. When they go to the theater, they want a lavish production, visible millions, their money's worth . . . . Broadway has become a tourist attraction, New York City's dilapidated and inadequate response to Disney World. Most native New Yorkers have come to regard it as . . . a place one goes to, if at all, only with out-of-town visitors . . . .

Let us suppose that legitimate theater is a lost cause on Broadway, except for a few ever-more-retro revivals each season. Doesn't that still leave the musical as a living art form? I think not, and for parallel reasons—the dwindling supply of talent and the disparity between what producers can offer and what consumers want . . . . If Broadway's musical menu is beginning to be almost as antiquarian as the Metropolitan Opera's, the reasons are no further away than your radio and your cable-TV screen. Broadway style . . . no longer represents the consensus preference in matters of song and dance.

tions in recent decades have made the real Mozart more visible. Indeed, the specialists' efforts, Hayes writes, have produced "a 'new' Mozart: a sophisticated social observer whose operas are charged with political overtones, a mercurial personality whose tangled finances and behavior are just now becoming better understood, and an almost inconceivably gifted musician whose inspirations and compositional procedures are no less astonishing" when seen in an accurate light.

Forbidden Garden

"Mondrian's Secret Garden" by Robert Kenner, in *Art & Antiques* (Mar. 1991), Art & Antiques Associates, 89 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10003.

Dutch painter Piet Mondrian's abstract arrangements of right angles and primary colors can be seen on everything from bedsheets to bathroom tiles. But Mondrian (1872–1944) himself remains a somewhat mysterious figure. Art historians have portrayed him as having made an orderly artistic progression from landscape painter to grid maker, but to tidily portray him thus, says Kenner, a senior editor at *Art & Antiques*, they have had to ignore an important part of his work—his flowers.

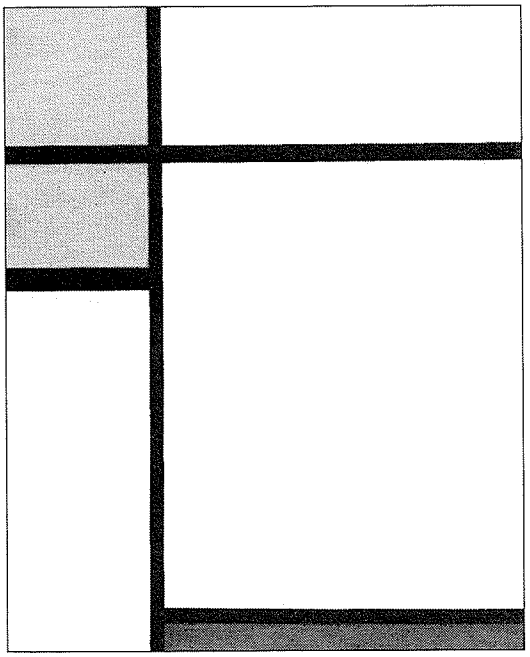
"Between 1900 and 1925, Mondrian the dogmatic abstractionist sketched or painted as many as 100 realistic studies of solitary flowers," Kenner notes. "These obsessively rendered blooms—crisp snowy blue chrysanthemums, languorously wilting sunflowers, vibrant red amaryllises, [a] penciled lily . . . fresh and frank as any nude—include some of the artist's boldest, most expressive work, but

he rarely exhibited them and wouldn't discuss them except to say they 'weren't any good' and had 'no permanent value.'"

Mondrian's realistic flowers ran counter to his own artistic doctrine of "neoplasticism," which he once defined as "the absolute devaluation of tradition . . . the exposure of the whole swindle of lyricism and sentiment . . . the need for abstraction and simplification." The artist, he often said, had to turn away from the delights of the natural world.

In his life, as in his art, Mondrian, a lifelong bachelor from a strict Calvinist family, was continually stripping away the extraneous. He appeared to be the most devout of abstractionists. Yet among the few things he kept always with him was a group of his flower pictures. "This fact alone speaks louder than all his own renunciations of his secret garden," Kenner says.

Mondrian believed that art could be a means to achieving "paradise on earth." His delicate flowers, Kenner writes, "form a sort of spiritual autobiography, a record of [his] oblations to the new art and the new life he believed it would usher in. If he recognized the integrity and power of these works, he suppressed them out of a fierce dedication to the ideals of 'neoplasticism.'"



Abstractionist Piet Mondrian, famous for such works as the 1933 Composition *(left), kept* Chrysanthemum *(right) and his other realistic studies of flowers hidden from public view.*

Literary Financiers

"The Literary Financier" by Harold James, in *The American Scholar* (Spring 1991), 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

The financier was one of the large figures of the 19th-century novel. In his savage satire, *The Way We Live Now* (1874–75), for example, Anthony Trollope tells of the sudden rise of financial speculator Augustus Melmotte, a "hollow vulgar fraud" whom a corrupt society chooses to venerate, and of his fall after being unmasked at the height of his success. Today, observes Princeton historian James, a modern Trol-

lope could draw upon the lives of an Ivan Boesky or a Michael Milken for inspiration—yet no serious "financier novels" have appeared. (The protagonist of Tom Wolfe's 1987 novel, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, was a New York banker, but financial themes remained on the novel's periphery.) Why is it, James asks, that "in an age wracked and obsessed by insider dealing, corrupt 'arbs' and manipulation of commodity markets, we do not revive the fine tradition of immortalizing commercial impropriety in the imagination"?

Part of the answer, he says, is that "more and more technical sophistication" has been required of the writer just to be able to describe what is happening. In Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912), which told of the ruthless Frank Cowperwood's rise to power before his fall in the financial panic of 1871, the reader really did learn how the Philadelphia stock exchange worked. By the time of the boom and crash of the late 1920s, however, the "technicalities of stock manipulation had become much too complicated to be easily and at the same time convincingly depicted," James says. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), bond traders frequently appear—but "we never understand what they do or how they do it."

The main reason for the decline of the financier novel, however, lies elsewhere. "The classic format was concerned with change and with the decline of an old standard of behavior," James says. "The financier becomes a scourge to punish the greed and immorality of an old elite that can no longer remain true to the idea of its mission."

In Trollope's novel, for instance, a character representing the established elite's traditional honesty and integrity says that the swindler Melmotte is "too insignificant for you and me to talk of, were it not that his position is a sign of the degeneracy of the age. What are we coming to when such as he is an honoured guest at our tables?"

"Once the old society with the high claims of the old order no longer existed," James says, "the formula for the finance novel disappeared." No longer was it possible to make "a morality tale out of the life and destiny of the man of business."

OTHER NATIONS

Who's Sorry Now?

"Manila's Malaise" by Carl H. Landé, in *Journal of Democracy* (Winter 1991), 1101 15th St. N.W., Ste. 200, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Philippine President Corazon Aquino's government has survived seven coup attempts, the most serious in December 1989, the most recent last October. After the "people power" revolution that ousted dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos from power in February 1986, the outlook for the consolidation of Philippine democracy seemed bright. Now, however, says University of Kansas political scientist Landé, there is "gnawing pessimism and disenchantment." The anti-democratic forces and those who assist them are primarily to blame, of course, although Aquino, her government, and the Philippine Congress are also at fault. But in a larger sense, Landé says, "the prospects for democracy are dim because of the structure and values of Philippine society, especially its most privileged and powerful classes."

Filippinos place a high value on forgiveness and reconciliation, especially when it comes to offenses against the state. After Marcos's downfall, politicians associated with his regime were soon back in the country's political mainstream. Marcos followers elected to Congress in 1987 were welcomed into the new pro-administration Philippine Democratic Party. "Forgiveness in private affairs is a virtue, and public forgiveness of those who have committed offenses against the state may be good policy

Corazon Aquino and others favoring Philippine democracy had much to smile about in 1986, when she was elected president and dictator Marcos was ousted, but the outlook now seems less bright.

if they have repented of their offenses," Landé says. "But indiscriminate forgiveness of those who, having plotted against the state, show no remorse and make clear their intention to repeat their offenses at their first opportunity, is hardly in the public interest." After the first (July 1986) military coup attempt against Aquino failed, the rebels, by way of punishment, were ordered to do push-ups!

In the Philippines today, Landé says, the "semi-loyal opposition" has many members, some of them in high places. Vice President Salvador Laurel, early in the course of the December 1989 coup attempt, made known his readiness to serve in a junta if one were formed. When the nation's vice president so easily disregards the rules of constitutional government, Landé says, "it is hardly surprising that junior officers and ordinary soldiers will follow a swashbuckling colonel who promises to set things right by taking over the government."

Just before the 1989 coup attempt, Eduardo Cojuangco, an influential and wealthy crony of Marcos, returned from exile in the United States, despite a prohibition against his return. His vast financial resources have made him an important political figure. "He remains a free man, many think, because it would appear unseemly for [Aquino] to order the arrest of her [cousin]," Landé notes. In Philippine society, the "strong networks of personal and familial relationships" loom much larger than laws and public institutions. That is not good news for Philippine democracy.

The South African Microcosm

"One Country, One World" by Paul Johnson, in *Leadership* (Special edition, 1991), Leadership Publications Ltd., First National House, 13th fl., 11 Diagonal St., Johannesburg, South Africa 2001.

South Africa often has been looked upon not only as a pariah nation, but as a nation unique in the world. In reality, contends Johnson, a noted British historian, South Africa is "a microcosm of the world. There is no other country on earth whose characteristics, and the difficulties they create, are closer to those of the world as a whole." If South Africa cannot solve its short- and medium-term problems, he says, it is unlikely that the world can solve *its* long-term problems.

Among the ways in which South Africa mirrors the world's challenges, in Johnson's view, are these:

• *Race:* "The world is composed of a white minority, with low birth rates, and a nonwhite majority, with high birth rates. So is South Africa." The one:six ratio of roughly five million whites and 30 million nonwhites living in South Africa is about the same as for the entire globe. "If we were to have a world government elected by universal adult suffrage, then the whites

would find themselves in a small, permanent minority, which would grow progressively smaller. That is the prospect universal suffrage holds out for South African whites too."

• *Language:* "There is no language in the world today which is spoken by a majority of its inhabitants.... We have the same situation in South Africa. The country has 11 major languages but not one is spoken by a majority of all its inhabitants.... Can you have world government without a world language? Perhaps. Can you have a national democracy without a national language? Again, perhaps, but obviously it increases the difficulties." The main obstacle to the introduction of full-fledged democracy in South Africa, Johnson says, is not "the gulf between blacks and whites," but rather "the violent chasm which separates blacks and blacks—a chasm widened by a multiplicity of languages which themselves reflect wide cultural divergences."

• *Power:* "The whites hold virtually all political, economic and military power in South Africa. Is it very different in the world as a whole?"

• *Politics:* "Like most of the world [South Africa] is faced by intractable, or at least very difficult, problems of wealth and poverty, racial and cultural differences, and it has tried to solve them by a combination of ideology and humbug. Apartheid, which I have always termed ethnic socialism, is not essentially different from the wide variety of collectivisms practiced over the last half-century by over 100 countries in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa itself." And like those various collectivisms, he says, apartheid "is a theoretical construct which goes against the grain of nature, and it has been conclusively demonstrated to be unworkable. So South Africa, like most of the rest of the world, is now trying to feel and argue its way towards a better system."

Democracy *will* come to South Africa, Johnson believes, but it cannot be made to happen overnight. "One-man-one-vote systems have failed throughout Africa and in much of the rest of the third world because they were introduced too quickly," he argues. "True democracy, in which the rule of law plays as big a part as freely-elected parliaments, is a plant of slow growth.... In my view, if the process is to succeed, it will require a generation."

The Two Chinas

"'Links' and 'Exchanges': The Mainland Policy of the ROC" by A. James Gregor, in *Global Affairs* (Winter 1991), International Security Council, 1155 15th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

The leaders of the Republic of China on Taiwan used to thunder against the "rebels" on the mainland and their "illegal" regime. But no more. Since 1987, restrictions on travel to the mainland have been lifted; trade has been allowed to mushroom (to more than $3.5 billion by 1989); mail and telephonic communications have been established; and investments by Taiwan businessmen in mainland undertakings soared to more than $3.7 billion by the end of 1989.

All that seems a far cry from Chiang Kai-shek's hard-line anticommunism and oft-stated desire to "recover the mainland." Cynics have suggested that with the passing in 1988 of Chiang's son and political heir, Chiang Ching-kuo, Taiwan's ruling Kuomintang, now led by Lee Teng-hui, has simply given up its longstanding political ideals in order to serve the island's economic needs. Berkeley political scientist Gregor, however, says that while economic pressures generated by financial and export problems were a factor in Taiwan's *volte-face*, the government's main purpose is still to "recover the mainland."

It was the younger Chiang himself—who, like his father, considered it "our solemn mission [to] unify China"—who initiated the new policy in 1987, when travel restrictions were relaxed, Gregor notes. After Chiang's death, the 13th Kuomintang Party Congress, meeting in July 1988, decided to continue on the new course. "The traditional anti-[People's Republic of

'We Eat One Another'

Soviet writer Tatyana Tolstaya, reviewing in the *New York Review of Books* (Apr. 14, 1991) the revised edition of *The Great Terror*, English writer Robert Conquest's classic account of Stalin's purges, ponders the unanswerable question about the horror: Why?

In Russia, in contrast to the West, reason has traditionally been seen as a source of destruction, emotion (the soul) as one of creation. How many scornful pages have great Russian writers dedicated to Western pragmatism, materialism, rationalism! They mocked the English with their machines, the Germans with their order and precision, the French with their logic, and finally the Americans with their love of money. As a result, in Russia we have neither machines, nor order, nor logic, nor money. "We eat one another and this satisfies us...." Rejecting reason, the Russian universe turns in an emotional whirlwind....

The enslavement of the peasants, which continued for 300 years, provoked such a feeling of guilt in the free, educated classes of Russian society that nothing disparaging could be said about the peasants.... Cultural taboos forbid us to judge 'simple people'—and this is typical not only of Russia. This taboo demands that a guilty party be sought 'high up.' It's possible that such a search is partly justified, but, alas, it doesn't lead to anything. Once an enemy is found 'up above,' the natural movement is to destroy him, which is what happens during a revolution. So he's destroyed, but what has changed? Life is just as bad as ever. And people begin ever new quests for enemies, detecting them in non-Russians, in people of a different faith, and in their neighbors. But they forget to look at themselves.

During Stalin's time, as I see it, Russian society, brutalized by centuries of violence, intoxicated by the feeling that everything was allowed, destroyed everything "alien": "the enemy," "minorities"—any and everything the least bit different from the "average." At first this was simple and exhilarating: the aristocracy, foreigners, ladies in hats, gentlemen in ties, everyone who wore eyeglasses, everyone who read books, everyone who spoke a literary language and showed some signs of education; then it became more and more difficult, the material for destruction began to run out, and society turned inward and began to destroy itself. Without popular support Stalin and his cannibals wouldn't have lasted for long. The executioner's genius expressed itself in his ability to feel and direct the evil forces slumbering in the people.

China] rhetoric was largely abandoned," Gregor writes, "in order to pursue a policy that would allow the [Kuomintang] the occasion to influence events and shape the future of mainland China."

Underlying the new policy was an assessment of the situation on the mainland quite different, until recently at least, from those of Western analysts. The latter expected the Chinese regime to evolve gradually in a liberal direction. But Chinese analysts on Taiwan perceived mainland China instead to be "threatened with economic, social, and political collapse." They expected not gradual evolution, Gregor says, but "fitful shifts from liberalization to repression in a tightening spiral of violence." Hence, they were not taken completely by surprise by the June 1989 massacre in Tiananmen Square. And after obligatory denunciations of the "barbaric" leadership in Beijing, Taipei then continued on its new course.

Since Tiananmen, the authorities in Beijing have been unable to regain control over China's economy, and there have been reports of widespread disaffection among members of the People's Liberation Army. "Should the political leadership in Beijing lose control not only of the economy but of the security forces as well," Gregor writes, "the [People's Republic of China] could easily slip into revolutionary crisis." In that event, "the political forces that emerge could easily include those financed and directed by [Taiwan's] Kuomintang." But even short of the communist system's complete collapse, Gregor says, Taiwan is hoping to influence developments on the mainland. With the contacts that have been developed there, he says, Taipei "has positioned itself to utilize every opportunity the uncertain future of mainland China might present."

RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"The Urban Underclass."

Brookings Institution, 1775 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. 490 pp. $34.95.
Editors: *Christopher Jencks and Paul E. Peterson*

The term *underclass* came into widespread use in the 1980s to denote that troubled fraction of the poor population that does not function in accordance with the larger society's basic norms. Inner-city neighborhoods had undergone "a profound social transformation," with increased rates of crime, joblessness, out-of-wedlock births, female-headed families, and welfare dependency, wrote University of Chicago sociologist William Julius Wilson in *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987). The alleged "growth" of the underclass became a political football. Conservatives portrayed it as the result of cultural decay and misguided social policies; some liberals saw it as an indictment of Washington's stinginess and conservative economic policies. But most of his fellow liberals, Wilson complained, were reluctant to squarely confront "the sharp increase in social pathologies in ghetto communities."

That situation has changed somewhat, as this thick volume of essays edited by Jencks, a prominent Northwestern sociologist, and Peterson, a Harvard political scientist, attests.

The underclass is not really new, Jencks observes. The "lower-class" lives described in Elliott Liebow's 1967 book, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*, for example, are "very similar . . . to the lives described in more recent writing on the underclass." But has this class of people been getting larger? Jencks's answer (contrary to news media reports) is equivocal, but it includes a qualified yes. In 1968, for example, 12.3 percent of impoverished adults were able-bodied, not students, not elderly—and not working; in 1987, the figure was 21.8 percent. However, Jencks warns, it would be wrong to conclude that everything has gotten worse for all poor people. "Economic conditions have deteriorated for workers without higher education, and two-parent families have become scarcer, but welfare dependency has not increased since the early 1970s, and illiteracy, teenage motherhood, and violence have declined somewhat."

Wilson, however, finds Jencks's discussion "not relevant." What distinguishes members of the underclass, he says, is the fact that "their marginal economic position or weak attachment to the labor force is uniquely reinforced by the neighborhood or social milieu." And the number of poor persons living in urban neighborhoods with overall poverty rates greater than 40 percent, according to Harvard political scientists Mary Jo Bane and Paul A. Jargowsky, increased between 1970 and 1980 by almost 30 percent—from less than 1.9 million to more than 2.4 million. New York City alone accounted for more than one-third of the increase; Chicago, Philadelphia, Newark, and Detroit accounted for another third. In small- and medium-sized cities in the South, the number shrank. The "massive industrial restructuring and loss of blue-collar jobs" in the Northeast and Midwest, Wilson maintains, caused the underclass increase.

Still, the 2.4 million underclass poor (two-thirds of them black) in 1980 constituted less than one-tenth of the nation's 27 million poor people. (A majority of the poor are white). Wilson's theory about the underclass "may still tell us important things about . . . blacks living in the largest central cities of the rustbelt," Peterson states, but it makes only "a modest contribution" to understanding why poverty persists in this affluent nation. The "main issue," he says, "is not so much a growth in the size of the underclass as the persistence of poverty decades after the country thought it had addressed the problem."

"The Electoral Origins of Divided Government: Competition in U.S. House Elections, 1946–1988."

Westview Press, 5500 Central Ave., Boulder, Colo. 80301. 152 pp. $38.50.
Author: *Gary C. Jacobson*

Voters have given Republicans the keys to the White House in seven of the last 10 presidential elections—and yet not since 1952 have Republicans been able to win a majority of seats in the House of Representatives. Is the popular will being frustrated, with divided

government the unhappy result? That is the implication of much recent scholarly research, which stresses the increased advantages of congressional incumbency. Jacobson, a University of California political scientist, disagrees. "Divided government reflects, rather than thwarts, the electorate's will," he contends.

The decline in voters' party loyalty in recent decades, he says, does help incumbent congressmen survive "contrary partisan tides." When voters bestowed the presidency on Republican George Bush in 1988, they also returned to the House all but six of the 408 incumbents (245 of them Democrats) who sought re-election.

But incumbents do die or retire, and that creates surprising turnover. Of the 260 Democrats who held House seats on Jan. 1, 1990, only 120 had more than 10 years of service under their belts. Republicans simply have not done as well as Democrats at taking advantage of the vacancies that occur. Between 1968 and '88, Democrats won 27.6 percent of the open seats formerly held by the GOP, while Republicans took only 19.9 percent of the open Democratic seats.

This poor GOP performance in incumbent-free contests, Jacobson argues, indicates incumbency is not the main reason Democrats have dominated the House (266–165, currently). Republicans, he says, have "fielded inferior candidates on the wrong side of issues that are important to voters in House elections."

The divided government of recent years reflects voters' desire to enjoy government's benefits without paying for them, Jacobson maintains. Americans have been able to vote both for GOP presidential candidates favoring low taxes and a strong national defense, and for congressional Democrats who promise to preserve the other fruits of government their constituents enjoy.

What, then, is the best hope for House Republicans? A Democratic presidency, says Jacobson.

"Talking Trash: Municipal Solid Waste Mismanagement."

Center for the Study of American Business, Washington Univ., Campus Box 1208, 1 Brookings Drive, St. Louis, Mo. 63130-4899. 24 pp. $2.
Author: *Kenneth Chilton*

Despite the nation's enthusiasm for recycling in recent years, America's municipal solid waste problem remains. So, not by coincidence, does the need for new landfills, says Chilton, of the Center for the Study of American Business.

By 1993, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has projected, only about 3,300 of the 5,500 landfills in operation in 1988 will be open. By the end of the 1990s, over 1,000 more will be closed. The EPA has proclaimed the goal of reducing the proportion of waste put in landfills from 73 percent in 1988 to 55 percent in 1992. (Recycling would jump from 13 percent of all waste to 25, and incineration, from 14 percent to 20.) But landfills still will be overwhelmed before this decade is out.

The disappearance of landfills should not be news, Chilton notes. They are designed for just 10–20 years of use. The problem is in the shortage of new ones. Whereas 300–400 municipal landfills were opening annually in the early 1970s, only 50–200 were in the 1980s.

There is no shortage of geologically suitable sites: One survey of less than half of New York state found areas totaling 200 square miles. The big obstacle is NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) sentiment, strengthened by environmentalist opposition. Ironically, landfills' risk to the environment has declined significantly. Modern landfills, with impermeable liners and systems for collecting leachate and monitoring methane gas, are much superior to the open dumps of the past. But safety is not cheap: a single-lined landfill can cost almost $66 million, a double-lined one, $87 million.

Siting new landfills, Chilton says, is "virtually a must to avoid a solid waste crisis." Economic incentives, he suggests, can be used to overcome NIMBYness. There's no guarantee that this strategy will work, of course. When Waste Management, a large solid waste disposal firm, offered $25 million to residents of Lake Calumet, Ill., to expand a landfill, residents still said no. Eventually, however, some Americans somewhere are going to have to say yes.

COMMENTARY

We welcome timely letters from readers, especially those who wish to amplify or correct information published in the Quarterly *and/or react to the views expressed in our essays. The writer's telephone number and address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.*

Tasteless at Best, Offensive at Worst

I wish to express my genuine disappointment with Malise Ruthven's essay, "The Mormons' Progress" [*WQ*, Spring '91]. As a non-Mormon historian, I found portions of the essay tasteless, misleading, and unfair. Moreover, many larger issues, especially relating to the reasons for the remarkable effectiveness of Mormon missionary activity and its changing emphasis, are left unilluminated. It is tasteless at best and offensive at worst to comment on how the name Moroni may be used as an adjective. For a professor of religion to rely on Mark Twain's comments on Mormon beliefs may seem clever, but in reality Ruthven indicates a rational secularism that is inappropriate in an honest discussion of someone else's faith. Moreover, at the risk of being accused of advocating politically correct speech, I believe it is tasteless in a pluralistic society to say of the founder of a church with even a handful of members, never mind 7.5 million, that "A martyred Prophet was much more valuable than a living impostor."

Equally disappointing because they are left unanswered are questions raised by the statement that the Mormons had 30,000 members in England in 1850. Quoting Klaus Hansen starkly out of context and referring to Jacksonian democracy simply will not do. These Mormons did not exemplify the Jacksonian American "common man" who wanted to be God. I was taken aback, too, by the none-too-subtle innuendo that Brent Scowcroft's role in the decision to locate MX missiles in Wyoming in some way indicated that he sacrificed patriotism for Mormonism. That is a cheap shot, and even though I disapprove of the MX program in its entirety, to deal with it without making clear the impact of the above-ground nuclear testing program in southern Utah is grossly unfair. As for the author's unblushing certainty of the conservative political character of the Mormon community, how is it that former congressman Morris Udall (D.-Ariz.) was overlooked? Let me close by pointing out that Mormons were a countercultural force for many reasons in Jacksonian America and later in the 19th century, and they are, for very subtle reasons, a countercultural force today, even as they pay lip service to a traditional variety of patriotism. More's the pity that Ruthven failed to see this clearly and to emphasize the implications of this irony. Embracing Mormonism in the 19th century meant surrendering not only one's former religion but also one's whole culture—whether domestic or foreign—to become an entirely new kind of American, who was invariably subjected to harassment and persecution. Embracing it in the 20th holds no such risks, but it does expose one to some of the conspiratorial and nonsensical innuendo in Ruthven's piece. I hope readers of the *WQ* who want to understand Mormonism will avail themselves of the books discussed in Jan Shipp's excellent Background Books essay.

Martin Ridge
Director of Research
The Huntington Library
California Institute of Technology
San Marino, Calif.

A Church of Contradictions

Every other line, or every other paragraph, of "The Mormons' Progress" should infuriate Mormons. Every *other* line, or every *other* paragraph, in turn, will be useful to the Mormon public relations people. Conversely, half the material in Malise Ruthven's article will delight non- or anti-Mormons, and the other half, well webbed into the first, will antagonize or tantalize them.

If my reading of that apparently contradictory set of accents is accurate, Ruthven has done his job well: He has caught the genius and captured the guise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That church could be a model from which other religious groups would take lessons if they could.

On the one hand, Mormonism offers what religions must if they wish to hold adherents: the sense of being a "cognitive minority." This means that what believers know leads them to gather so that they can interpret the world distinctively. Some of this accounting strikes non-Mormons as bizarre, maybe even of fraudulent origin. But it has come to be believed, and it serves to do for Saints what not all faiths do for their adherents: It gives them more reasons to be in the group than outside it.

On the other hand, Mormonism in America offers what prophetic religions are nervous about doing: It sets its followers down, squat and settled and securely, in the American environment which it in-

terprets so differently. Ruthven's remarks about the congeniality of the Mormon way with the *Reader's Digest* imagery makes the point well. This "un-American" faith is, paradoxically and simultaneously, so "super-American." The best of both worlds!

One other clear sense comes from Ruthven's article and the books suggested in the essay by Jan Shipps: The Mormons are less a church than a people. It is easier to get a person out of Mormonism than to get Mormonism out of a person—even out of a rebel. So the Mormon impulse is going to be with us, a growing phenomenon among us, and it is good to have this fresh charting.

Martin Marty
Dept. of Divinity
University of Chicago

A Victim of Sources

In assessing the value of an article about religion, I find it useful to use a standard restated by David Brion Davis in a recent issue of *Religion and American Culture*. In commenting on an article by Jan Shipps, Davis suggested that "she presents the cultural and socioeconomic background of Mormon history but never uses this background to cast doubt on the authenticity of religious needs and religious beliefs."

In this regard, although Malise Ruthven's article contains some valuable insights such as the fact that the Book of Mormon "places the Western Hemisphere at the center of the plan of divine redemption," the general tone of his article is far too flippant and secular. He is, after all, writing about a religious tradition that nearly eight million people find spiritually enriching.

In part he is the victim of his sources. For instance, he relies for economic data on Heinerman and Shupe. In fact, their work belongs on the supermarket shelf next to those tabloids with headlines like "Woman Impregnated by Alien, Gives Birth to Cyclops."

In fact, most of the LDS "corporate" property consists of structures used for religious purposes that produce no wealth. As Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor to the First Presidency pointed out in an address in April 1991, the Church has "a few income-producing business properties, but the return from these would keep the Church going only for a very brief time."

Most important, perhaps, Ruthven's essay shows little understanding of religious experience. If he understood the phenomenon more, he would recognize that even in Third World countries most people convert to a church to fill spiritual needs. Some may join for economic or other secular reasons, but the demands of the LDS Church for activity, financial commitment, and personal worthiness quickly sift out the unconverted. Moreover, the large drop-out rate (estimated at between three- and four-fifths in underdeveloped countries) was characteristic of periods of rapid conversion in the 19th century as well. If those who join find spiritual fulfillment and a sense of religious community with the Mormons, they remain. If they do not, they move on to something else.

Thomas G. Alexander
Dept. of History
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah

A Bag of Tricks

With all the good material written about the American religious movement called Mormonism, it is hard to understand why this article saw light. It introduces no new ground of understanding and makes no pretense of understanding the many good and gentle people who espouse this conviction. The author does not reveal a single skeleton which has not already been bleached white with exposure.

I have been around the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (RLDS) community for more than 50 years, but I have yet to hear anyone express the view that "their Prophet's progeny were cheated of the leadership." Such a statement is ridiculous and reflects the author's ignorance of Mormonism as a wide community.

Such misstatements might be understandable from an author of a tour guide, maybe even from a historian who had ventured out of his own field. But an author who is a professor of religious history should be more scholarly in his investigations and more academic in his comments.

Professor Ruthven has dipped into his bag of "éxposé, accusation, and quick cliché" and identified the standard charges against the Mormons: connections with the CIA (based, it seems, on their parallel dress codes), buyers of forged documents, "one of the wealthiest and most powerful institutions in the United States," and, of course, the Mormons as "super-capitalists."

He also manages to get almost every known cliché into this article: "barbarism's 'twin relics'" (used three times), "Disneyland version of the Joseph Smith story," the "voice of God [expanded] to 15,000 megawatts," and Mark Twain's favorite "chloroform in print."

Along with this he manages to make some really silly assumptions, for example, assuming that the

number of subscribers to *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* gives you an accurate account of the intelligentsia of Mormonism.

Save us from another scholar who suddenly discovers the world of Mormonism and thinks he has found an untapped source for exposure. The study has been going on a long time and Professor Ruthven should check it out before he attempts to describe it.

Paul M. Edwards
President, Temple School
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Independence, Mo.

The Mormon Work Ethic

Both Malise Ruthven and Jan Shipps suggest that understanding Mormonism is contingent on understanding Mormonism's place in American culture. But, as Ruthven points out so well, placing Mormonism in the context of American culture is not easy since that religion seems both to defy and exemplify characteristics of middle-class American culture. It occurs to me that some of Max Weber's ideas about the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism may be useful in sorting out this conundrum.

Weber argued that the Protestant commitment to self-distancing mastery of the material world made that world an "iron cage." The truth of this argument is born out in the religious, artistic, and intellectual expressions of middle-class American culture, insofar as those expressions reflect a Protestant-tinged awareness of the ironic relationship between having a calling to master the world and feeling at home in that world. The Mormons' distinctiveness within American culture can be described in terms of their ability to accept the Protestant work ethic while avoiding its existential pain. Although in their sobriety and dedication to work, Mormons display the religious asceticism that Weber associated with Protestantism, they seem to enjoy a happier materialism, a greater sense of belonging to community, and perhaps also a lack of a sense of irony.

While Mormons have inherited only half of Protestantism, they are full-fledged, exemplary capitalists. The efficiency, productivity, and reliability of industries headed by Mormons, such as UPS, Marriott, and Eastman-Kodak, seems to bear out Weber's prediction that a "victorious capitalism" could flourish on soil earlier tilled unsuccessfully by other entrepreneurs. Thus some of the characteristics of Mormonism fit Weber's understanding of the advanced cultural development of capitalism. But if Mormonism lacks a certain intellectual depth, as Weber's theory of development predicts, its moral earnestness discredits Weber's sour estimate of the last stage of capitalism: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."

Amanda Porterfield
Dept. of Religion
Syracuse University
Syracuse, N.Y.

Environmental Hype and Hoax

Stephen Klaidman ["Muddling Through," *WQ*, Spring '91] does a commendable job of tracing the history of modern environmental activism. Three case studies—Love Canal, the EDB controversy, and greenhouse warming—illustrate how activists, bureaucrats, politicians, journalists, and scientists themselves use or misuse scientific data in order to advance a politically correct environmental agenda.

"Environmental advocacy, . . . meant to serve the public interest, has gotten out of hand," Klaidman says. Credibility is lost as science has repeatedly exposed hype and hoax. Yet America is likely to continue lurching from environmental crisis to environmental crisis—largely because of the way scientific evidence is used.

Klaidman puts most of the blame on the media for not educating the public. It seems to me, however, that attention should also be given to the feedbacks and reinforcements among the media, activist groups, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Journalists have become unabashed advocates of environmental regulation rather than objective reporters of the issues. Their uncritical coverage of environmental scare stories puts pressure on politicians and EPA bureaucrats. At the same time, bureaucrats with vested interests in regulation and politicians with vested interests in legislation have developed intimate ties with the media, which enables them to influence stories and advance their agenda. Environmental groups routinely sue the EPA to force the strictest interpretation of federal environmental laws; EPA staffers often work hand-in-glove with these groups and encourage such lawsuits. Policies begin to outrun scientific facts and assume a momentum of their own. In the process, of course, rationality is lost and scientific evidence discarded.

A recent example is the acid rain legislation, which was passed in 1990 with hardly a glance at the scientific evidence accumulated by the feder-

ally conducted National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program (NAPAP). The 10-year, $600 million NAPAP study demonstrated that acid rain damage had been vastly exaggerated and that the costs of the control program would overwhelm any benefits derived.

It seems increasingly difficult to design policies that can be amended if the underlying science should change. Klaidman presents some relevant examples. Other examples could be cited—the dioxin scare or the asbestos scare—where the EPA has adjusted established policy to accommodate new scientific facts. On the other hand, the radon issue is an instance where scientific facts have not yet brought about a change in existing policies.

The nation is paying a huge price for environmental protection, now well over $100 billion a year. But even though opinion polls show the public saying that "no price is too great to pay in the name of environmental quality," the truth is that the nation lacks the basic information for a "rational ordering of risks." What is needed, and what Klaidman recommends, is not resolution of all scientific uncertainty—an unattainable goal—but "enough investigation to separate facts and reasonable beliefs from half-truths and misleading constructions, and enough information for a reader . . . to make an informed judgment." He might have added: to recognize hype and hoax.

S. Fred Singer
Guest Scholar, Wilson Center
Dept. of Environmental Sciences (on leave)
University of Virginia

The Changing Landscape

I find myself less concerned about the occasional warping of rational priorities that comes about because of public fondness for crises—real or perceived—or about the only gradually evolving philosophical conceptions about our proper relationship to the natural environment than I am about our ability to get usable handles on the most pressing long-term problems.

I believe it is true that the public and politicians tend to focus on the latest crisis and that some of the perceived dangers have much less substance than others. However, it is equally the case that our political system in general fails to operate unless goaded by crises. At such times, action long thought desirable becomes possible. The challenge, for politicians, the media, scientists, and public interest organizations, is to focus the attention generated by unfolding events into meaningful, cost-effective policy decisions.

As we try to shape the degree and nature of our intervention in natural processes, new approaches and new measures of success will aid our decisions. Setting aside small parcels of land without recognition of natural boundaries will no longer be judged sufficient. We must now "manage" entire landscapes, with a focus on protecting biological diversity, landscapes that include areas that are left relatively undisturbed as well as land in which some human activities are allowed.

As we lurch from one crisis to another, doing our best to develop sensible public policy and to avoid the pitfalls of undesirable anthropomorphic views of our relationship to nature, we must find ways to focus sufficient energy on bringing human population size back into balance with available resources. This challenge will come to occupy human endeavors for the next several generations and must include major changes in political, economic, and religious institutions.

Susan Merrow
President, Sierra Club
San Francisco, Calif.

Swim Suit or Overcoat?

I was amused by the following paragraph on page 67 of your Spring 1991 issue:

"So by the early 1860s, anxieties about artificially induced climatic changes and species extinction had reached a climax. The subsequent evolution of the awareness of a global environmental threat has, to date, consisted almost entirely of a reiteration of a set of ideas that had reached full maturity over a century ago. The pity is that it has taken so long for them to be taken seriously."

What has happened to global climatic change over the past century and a quarter? Nothing. Don't you think it's amusing that the same alarmist clichés should be taken seriously after 125 years in spite of the historical evidence?

From time to time during that period the alarmists have assured us that the Ice Age is back; in between such solemn assurances we've been told the earth is getting warmer. The warmer assurances are popular in some pseudo-scientific circles, but presumably the fashion will change.

Determining true global temperatures has been impossible until recently, when orbiting satellites have been able to do the job. The results obtained by such a satellite, orbiting in the 10-year period 1979–88, were reported in *Science* on March 30, 1990. It was found that although there were changes from year to year, no discernible change in global temperature had occurred during the 10 years. This is the only fact about global temperature that has turned up yet; all else is theory, and

it's a great pity that costly "remedies" should be urged based on only a theory contradicted by the satellite and by a century and a quarter of history.

On page 78 it is stated that "Greenhouse gases . . . do trap heat in the earth's atmosphere and do increase the planet's air temperature" but no scientific data can be cited supporting this statement; we are expected to have faith in "computer models." But some people believe that greenhouse gases will increase cloud cover and have a cooling effect on the earth.

William T. St. Clair
Naples, Fla.

Don't Blame Environmentalists

Stephen Klaidman is right that Americans are deeply confused about the environment, that we have environmental consciousness aplenty but no real vision or shared ethic to use to sort out priorities, that scientists will never have all the answers in time to avert problems, and that scientific uncertainty need not paralyze policy. But on two counts I take exception.

First, Klaidman contends that environmentalists manufacture and thrive on crises. Perhaps some do, but at bottom his critique of made-for-TV politics applies to our whole governing culture, and to focus on business-as-usual in Washington and the national media is to miss important international and local environmental gains. The worldwide groundswell of grassroots efforts to save remaining tropical forests is just one example. It's also easy to forget the day-in, day-out research and trends-tracking performed by conscientious environmentalists hoping to avert crises.

Second, Klaidman's hope that environmentalists will in the future stick to the facts is misplaced. Greater accuracy and less selective use of the facts are more important than ever as environmental ills grow increasingly complex and interrelated. Devoting more time, as Klaidman suggests, to "separat-[ing] facts and reasonable beliefs from half-truths and misleading constructions" certainly makes sense. But environmental education is a long-term affair that has just begun, and the conviction that the facts alone will prompt policy change is naive. For both reasons, environmentalists must continue to do their best to put "the facts" into perspective for the public and policymakers.

Like the system in which they work, environmentalists are not above reproach, and Klaidman raises important issues of judgment and credibility. But he might be less pessimistic about our environmental future if he could better separate environmentalism's faults from those of the American media and political system.

Kathleen Courrier
Publications Director
World Resources Institute
Washington, D.C.

The Galileo Illusion

The premise of Thomas D. Gilovich's fine article ["The 'Hot Hand' and Other Illusions of Everyday Life," *WQ*, Spring '91] was exemplified by his own statement concerning Galileo and "The Inquisition." This hoary old story is a dearly held bit of scientistic folklore. In his article he states, "The stifling dogma of the 17th-century clergymen who, doubting Galileo's claim that the earth was not the center of the solar system, put him under house arrest for the last eight years of his life."

In fact, such a statement is not borne out by the contemporary evidence of those *four* days in June of 1633 when Galileo was examined by the Holy Office ("The Inquisition"). The questions concerned his theology, not his astronomy, neither of which was his strong point.

The heliocentric theory of Copernicus was in print and well accepted by 1633. History shows us that Copernicus sent *De Revolutionibus Orbium Celestium* to the printers in Nuremberg in 1543, which was 90 years before Galileo's "trial."

Galileo's main work was in mechanics and dynamics, and his greatest contribution to science was his *Dialoghi delle Nuovo Scienze*. This was published in 1636, while he was in seclusion in his villa at Arcetri near Florence. Perhaps the penalty given by the Holy Office in 1633, which amounted to his saying the Seven Penitential Psalms once a week for three years and his removal from public life and theological controversy, permitted him to complete his greatest work.

Galileo's interest in theology led to a conflict concerning some of the discrepancies between the Copernican heliocentric theory and certain passages in the Scriptures as early as 1613. He kept up a running dispute with ecclesiastical authorities over these matters for the next 29 years.

A close examination of these years of this "theological" conflict shows us that the Holy Office exhibited great patience in dealing with a brilliant and somewhat querulous Italian, who, at the time, was the world's greatest maker of telescopes.

Enjoying Gilovich's article as much as I did, I felt obligated to point out that it gives us solid empirical evidence that the commonly held "persecution of Galileo" illusion is still with us.

Edward R. Donohoe
West Southport, Maine

Idle Thoughts

In reading George Watson's essay ["The Decay of Idleness," *WQ*, Spring '91], I thought at first that, despite the title, here was an apologist for the lifestyles of such types as Bertie Wooster and Algernon Moncrieff. We are, after all, currently involved in a reassessment of what went on during the "Reagan '80s" when to be anything but motivated and upwardly mobile was unpatriotic. Yet polls now show that those on the fast track are feeling a need to pursue a more meaningful way of life. While it isn't implied that elitist indolence is returning to vogue, we may face a future, conceived in these frenetic, achievement-oriented times, in which busy, driven people will be as uncommon as a gentleman's gentleman is today.

The bulk of labor shifted in the 1980s from manufacturing to the service industries. Agriculture, manufacturing, and services have consecutively occupied the bulk of human workers. But what is there after the service sector? Because of increasing labor costs, and the shortage of people willing to work in many service-sector jobs, business managers again face the problem of increasing productivity, which means that fewer people will have to do more of the work. If this scenario should materialize, then indolence is the future for at least 85 percent of our population. Where Professor Watson sees a dead, fossilized lifestyle, I see one that could be poised for a glorious resurrection.

Most people would regard the Trollopeian-Wildeian-Wodehouseian "Idles" as contemptible because their lifestyle was underwritten by other persons who did work. This is still common today, though idleness appears more acceptable when independently wealthy people give the impression that they are adding to the economic pie. But no one thinks it is immoral to live off of wealth produced by machines. Visualize a society 85 percent of whose members are endowed with shares in the machine-owning economic institutions that produce the wealth. All of these idle people would receive quarterly dividend checks providing income to them. Unemployment would cease to be a problem and the consuming society would retain all of its consumers. But just in case the Devil really does find work for "idle" hands, a concerted effort could be made to make sure this future is one of stylish gentility. Schools would instruct in the social graces and develop an appreciation of art, music, literature, nature, and charitable concerns. Transgressors of the social order would of course be dealt with by the police, whose members would be part of the working 15 percent.

Peter S. Whyte
Napa, Calif.

Corrections

In a review of a *Scientific American* article about aspirin [*WQ*, Spring '91, p. 129], it was stated that when the Rev. Edward Stone found the bark of a willow tree to be, as he wrote in 1763, "a powerful astringent, and very efficacious in curing anguish and intermitting disorders," he had unknowingly "discovered salicylic acid—better known today as aspirin." That is an oversimplification. What Stone discovered, although he didn't know it, was the power of *derivatives* of salicylic acid, one of which is acetylsalicylic acid or "aspirin."

On p. 94 of that issue, in a review of *Making Sex* by Thomas Laqueur, it was stated that Aristotle had refined a theory first proposed by the Greek anatomist Galen. The review should have stated the opposite; Aristotle died in 322 B.C., some 450 years before Galen was born.

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