

Seligman writes, represents "an alternative moral universe of values or norms, an image of the public good with claims to overall legitimacy that the Church in [the] West has more or less renounced."

For such reasons, Jowitt is scornful of "the facile pacific notion of 'transiting to democracy' (where having entered at the 'Lenin station' one gets off at the 'liberal station')." In Eastern Europe, he observes, nearly half a century of a party elite overseeing "ideologically unreconstructed" masses has widened the gap between the public and private realms. He quotes Alexis de Tocqueville on how despotism "depriv[es] the governed of any sense of solidarity and interdependence; of good-neighboring feeling and a desire to further the welfare of the community at large."

Arnold Toynbee described history in terms of the rise and fall of "world civilizations." Jowitt believes that Leninist society was one such civilization, and that its collapse may have repercussions as significant as those resulting from the fall of the Roman Empire. Jowitt likens Eastern Europe today (except for, perhaps, Poland) to the Third World in the wake of decolonialization, predicting that "demagogues, priests, and colonels" will now shape that region. Although less pessimistic than Jowitt, Seligman has little hope for the triumph of such Western ideas as civil society and Enlightenment humanism in the former Soviet empire, especially when these ideas seem in trouble in the very lands of their invention. "There are serious problems," he dryly concludes, "with the vision of Eastern Europe as the Scottish Enlightenment *revivudus*."

SEX AND REASON. By Richard A. Posner.
Harvard. 458 pp. \$29.95

Today a voyeur in a porno shop confronts less sexual material than do many judges in U.S. courts. Abortion, homosexual rights, surrogate motherhood, AIDS matters, funding of erotic arts, sexual harassment in the workplace, pornography—all are overloading America's already strained court system. Yet most judges, writes Posner, who sits on the Seventh Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals, "know next to nothing about the subject [of sex] beyond their own per-

sonal experience, which is limited." Here Posner tells them everything they needed to know but never bothered to ask.

In the last election some politicians sought to turn the "family values" debate into a crusade for traditional sexual arrangements. Such a campaign, Posner implies, is folly because there are no "natural" sexual arrangements or norms. Conducting a grand tour of the practices of other cultures and eras, Posner discovers that what is condemned as deviant in one place is accepted as normal in another. As an example of "sexual relativism" closer to home, Posner cites heterosexual prisoners who, when no women are available, will engage in homosexual acts. "If the price of vanilla skyrockets," he comments, "you may decide to substitute chocolate even though you have a strong preference for vanilla . . ."

Posner never says whether his own tastes run toward chocolate or vanilla. In this 450-page catalogue of fleshly desires and cultural responses, only once does he endorse something as "exciting": not nude dancing, sadomasochism, or pornography, but economics. To bring sex into the court system rationally, Posner treats it not as an instinctual matter but as a deliberate, conscious choice (see heterosexual prisoners), one that can be logically adjudicated. And the logic that explains and rationalizes sexual behavior, for Posner, is the economist's concept of rational self-interest. Using this economic gauge of rational self-interest, Posner, a conservative judge appointed by Ronald Reagan, ends up defending almost everything Reaganites find abhorrent. He would not forbid abortion in early pregnancy or criminalize homosexual acts or stamp out prostitution or ban pornography by recognized artists: In these cases, he says, the individual is only acting in his or her self-interest, without doing provable harm to the rest of society.

How persuasive has the judge made his case? Freud might have howled at Posner's thesis that "emotionality" attaches to the sexual act itself but does not significantly affect the thinking that precedes or follows it. Lesser mortals may get a few chuckles, too, when Posner explains the rationality of women wearing high heels: It restricts their movements, and that restriction suggests they are more likely to be contained within a marriage arrangement. Ironically,

Posner may fail to convince his readers that eroticism involves so many rational, "economically" calculable acts, even while he provides a model of how a jurist can dispense with personal prejudice and reason dispassionately about sex.

SPEAKING OF DIVERSITY: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America. By Philip Gleason. Johns Hopkins. 314 pp. \$40

There is no coming to terms with a social issue without a terminology to discuss it. Gleason, a historian at Notre Dame, has an exceptionally good ear for the language in which political and cultural understandings (and misunderstandings) have been expressed. Here he explores the various vocabularies that American scholars have used to write about ethnicity.

As the social sciences became professionalized after World War I, scholars settled on the concept of "culture" to discuss matters of race and ethnicity. Popularized by anthropologists like Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, culture meant the norms, institutions, and beliefs that group members shared with one another. While obviously useful in describing life *within* a group, the term offered little help in understanding America's cultural pluralism. Although Benedict and Mead wished to promote tolerance and cosmopolitanism, Gleason finds that a true tolerance of diversity was all but contradicted by their view of culture as a patchwork of groups, each sufficient in its own traditions and self-contained within its own values.

During the 1930s, American social scientists turned away from "culture" to the idea of the "minority group," a term formerly associated

with the nationalities problem in European states. Academics thus hoped to break free of a vocabulary "shot through with invidious assumptions." Yet European ethnic minority groups wanted autonomy, separatism, states of their own; American racial minority groups sought improved status within the larger society. In America, certain groups (African-Americans, Hispanics) eventually came to be thought of, usually on racial grounds, as "official" minorities, while the very "Euro-ethnic" peoples to whom "minority group" had first been applied were hardly considered minorities at all. (Gleason leaves it to readers to connect these semantic confusions to the actual public policies, from affirmative action to ethnic preservation, that they helped to shape.)

During the 1950s, the buzzword again changed, from "minority group" to "identity." Psychologists influenced by Erik Erikson conceived of identity as something primordial—"deep, internal, and permanent"—a "given" that could not be changed. Sociologists, however, interpreted identity as an "option," a choice regarding "a dimension of individual and group existence that could be consciously emphasized or deemphasized as the situation requires." Primordialists and optionalists might use the same terminology while differing profoundly on whether ethnic identity was something to be lived with or transcended.

Gleason likewise examines a half-dozen other concepts—"assimilation," "Americanization," "national character," "oppressed groups," "people of color," and "cultural pluralism"—as each in its turn became the term of the debate. Although he himself proposes no answers, the clarity Gleason pleads for may be a prelude to real solutions. "Government by discussion is

