

Reeves does in his masterly book *President Nixon: Alone in the White House* (2001), that intellectuals yield to no class of political insiders in their empire building, paranoia, and duplicity. All those tenure fights must pay off.

The most serious flaw in this work is the premise itself: that the relationship between presidents and intellectuals is “crucial.” Indeed, Troy himself provides some of the best refutations of that notion. He argues that the first President Bush was doomed because he lacked the sort of “single, unifying vision” that an intellectual adviser might have supplied. Yet, as Troy also notes, Bush proclaimed that “I’m not much for the airy and abstract—I like what works.” No intellectual ambassador could

have made a difference. Bush, by personality and character, was the kind of custodial president destined to be reelected in good times and defeated in gloomy times. Similarly, the mutual contempt between Johnson and the intellectual community had nowhere near the political import of a divisive war in Vietnam and racial and generational upheaval at home.

Troy’s book ends with a crisp, two-page “guidebook” on how to deal with intellectuals. Some samples: “Don’t ignore intellectuals.” “Don’t be an intellectual.” I commend this section to time-pressed presidents. They can probably skim the rest of the book while awaiting the latest poll data from Illinois.

—JEFF GREENFIELD

CONTEMPORARY AFFAIRS

LEADERSHIP ON THE LINE:

Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading.

By Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky. Harvard Business School Press. 252 pp. \$27.50

“A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good.” So said Niccolò Machiavelli in his incomparable guide to leadership, *The Prince* (1513). He felt compelled to add that in order to survive, a prince must “learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case.”

Machiavelli is long dead, but the challenges of leadership live on, even in a time and place that idealizes a very different model of authority. Thus we have *Leadership on the Line*, an earnest guide to leadership in the therapeutic age. Heifetz and Linsky are thoughtful and widely experienced authors who teach at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, but they come across at times as Alan Alda with an MBA.

There is a certain aptness in this. Their audience is not, after all, securing a hostile Italian city-state but trying to get something done in the land of computers and cubicles. And as business books go, this one is a

model of clarity. Much of what the authors say is obviously right, and their combined experience and reading give real depth to their advice, even if it is occasionally couched in some awful dialect of consultant-speak, as in “Hennie Both and Ruud Koedijk maintained high energy within the holding environment of the task force structure.”

What’s more, they’ve tackled the right subject. It’s clear from the torrent of management books published every year, to say nothing of the fortune spent on “organizational development” and other such consulting, that people in business have a deep hunger for help in this arena. Heifetz and Linsky obligingly flesh out their work with a great many anecdotes about famous leaders, including corporate chieftains, presidents, and other luminaries.

But in doing so, the authors beg a big question: Why are people in business reading books like this one when they could simply read Machiavelli? Every corporate chieftain lives by at least some of his rules. It was Machiavelli who said that “in taking a state, the conqueror must arrange to commit all his cruelties at once,” after which he can dole out soothing kindnesses. And who can dispute that “there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle,

than to initiate a new order of things?"

The Prince is the ultimate self-help book for big shots, but literature, too, is full of books that deal in dramatic fashion with problems of leadership. Consider Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon* (1903), Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912), or F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941). Better yet, pick one of Shakespeare's tragedies at random. Or how about what the leaders themselves have to say? Surely Ulysses S. Grant's *Personal Memoirs* (1885) can teach us more, and more effectively, than yet

another book by a management guru. Alfred P. Sloan's *My Years with General Motors* (1964) is a classic that remains in print, and even Jack Welch's *Jack: Straight from the Gut* (2001) has many interesting things to say about leadership.

The fundamental question, of course, is whether this sort of thing can be learned at all. Machiavelli knew about that problem too. "It is an infallible rule," he wrote, "that a prince who is not wise himself cannot be well-advised."

—DANIEL AKST

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

ROBERT NOZICK.

By A. R. Lacey. Princeton Univ. Press.
248 pp. \$17.95

INVARIANCES:

The Structure of the Objective World.

By Robert Nozick. Harvard Univ. Press.
416 pp. \$35

Robert Nozick, the Harvard University philosopher who died in January at 63, earned his considerable public reputation with his first book, the libertarian manifesto *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). He had mixed feelings about this reputation, because he never really considered himself a *political* philosopher. After *ASU*, he devoted almost all his attention to the big problems of philosophy: value, knowledge, rationality. Ambitious topics, certainly, yet with Nozick there has always been a sense of ambition not quite fulfilled, of expectations not quite met.

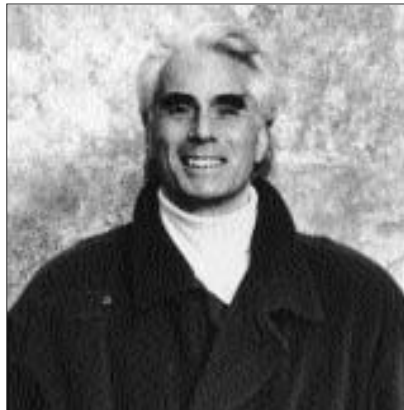
There are two reasons for this. The first is methodological. Especially in his later work, Nozick rejected the notion of "proof" as the aim of philosophy. He sought to say things that were "new and interesting," even if not, strictly speaking,

true—concocting inventive explanations for how it could be that there is something rather than nothing, for instance, or for why we might have free will. Second, his writing is not always accessible. *ASU* is rightly praised for the clarity and liveliness of its prose, but his next book, *Philosophical Explanations* (1981), is long, dense, and frequently unrewarding. As Nozick himself confessed, in some parts he was merely "thrashing about."

As a result, Nozick has long been in need of a critical expositor, someone to present his philosophy in a straightforward yet rigorous fashion. This is Lacey's goal, and the results are mixed. The book, clear if rather stiff, covers every major aspect of Nozick's thought, including his original contributions to epistemology, rationality, and metaphysics. Yet

by the end, even the careful and sympathetic reader may be left wondering just what Nozick was about.

Lacey begins each chapter with a short overview of the general nature of the philosophical problem to be considered, followed by a too-brief statement of Nozick's position and then a look at the objections



Robert Nozick