

Catholics and Jews as well.

A similar collapse of theological liberalism occurred in Weimar Germany after the devastation of World War I. Defeated Germans abandoned the liberal-democratic religious Center for a wild assortment of religious and political groups as they searched for a more authentic spiritual experience and a more judgmental God. So far, says Lilla, the most disturbing manifestations of the Amer-

ican turn—the belief in miracles, the rejection of basic science, the demonization of popular culture—have occurred in culture, not politics. But Americans are right to be vigilant about the intrusion of such impulses into the public square, because “if there is anything. . . John Adams understood, it is that you cannot sustain liberal democracy without cultivating liberal habits of mind among religious believers.”

## *Freedom's the Liberal Ticket*

“Taking Liberty” by William A. Galston, in *The Washington Monthly* (April 2005), 733 15th St., N.W., Ste. 520, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Here's a remedy for liberals despondent at their low standing with the American public: Stop going against the American grain, and put freedom back in liberal thinking and discourse. Not the conservatives' flawed notion of freedom, in which government is usually seen as a threat, but rather the evolving liberal conception, championed by 20th-century progressives from Theodore Roosevelt to John F. Kennedy, in which government can act to advance freedom.

“Government is [not] the only, or always the gravest, threat to freedom; clerical institutions and concentrations of unchecked economic power have often vied for that dubious honor,” argues Galston, interim dean of the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy and a former deputy assistant to President Bill Clinton for domestic policy. The free market, left unrestrained, often works to undermine “the moral conditions of a free society.” And economic, social, and even familial dependence can damage character just as much as long-term dependence on government can.

Liberals became disenchanted with the cause of freedom during the Vietnam War, which led them to reject all efforts to extend freedom abroad. Conservatives picked up the fallen banner and won the public over to their conception of freedom. In response, liberals turned to the courts and redefined the liberal agenda in terms of fairness and equality of results. Most Americans remain unpersuaded—and liberals remain out in the cold.

“In the real world,” contends Galston, “which so many conservatives steadfastly refuse to face, there is no such thing as freedom in the abstract. There are only specific freedoms.” Franklin Roosevelt famously identified four: freedom of speech and of worship, freedom from want and from fear.

In contrast with *freedom of*, which points toward realms where government's chief role is to protect individual choice, *freedom from* points toward a responsibility to help citizens avoid unwanted circumstances. When Social Security was introduced, for example, Roosevelt justified it as promoting freedom from want and protecting citizens and their families against “poverty-ridden old age.”

“Liberals seldom talk about Social Security or other programs in terms of freedom,” notes Galston, but they should. Take universal health care. It would free countless people now trapped in their jobs by the need for health insurance to pursue other opportunities. Or take individual choice. Liberals should embrace it when it serves their principled purposes—by supporting individual retirement savings accounts, for example, not as part of Social Security but as additions to it.

In foreign affairs, says Galston, President George W. Bush's “faith in the transformative power of freedom . . . is not wholly misplaced.” But “contemporary conservatism, with its free-lunch mentality,” has a hard time admitting that freedom requires sacrifices, such as higher taxes in wartime.

Liberals have pined too much for a culture less individualistic than America's reality is, according to Galston. "As FDR did

three-quarters of a century ago, we must mobilize and sustain a popular majority with the freedom agenda our times require."

## *In Your Face*

"The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust" by Diana C. Mutz and Byron Reeves, in *American Political Science Review* (Feb. 2005), American Political Science Assn., 1527 New Hampshire Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

It's become fashionable to blame television shoutfests such as *The O'Reilly Factor* for Americans' growing disaffection with politics. But why should a bunch of shouting heads be such a turnoff?

To find out, political scientists Mutz and Reeves, of the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University, respectively, corralled a group of hapless volunteers and sat them down—some with electrodes attached—to watch two versions of a political talk show created by the researchers.

In one version, the actors carried on a polite discussion, while in the other they interrupted each other, rolled their eyes, and generally misbehaved. All of the viewers found the "uncivil" show more entertaining, but differences emerged when they were given an opinion survey shortly after watching the two programs.

On the whole, those who saw the uncivil show suddenly recorded decreased levels of trust in politicians and the political system generally. (Interestingly, however, trust *increased* slightly among viewers who were identified in psychological tests as prone to conflict in their own lives.) Among those

who watched the civil show, there was no change. So, contrary to a lot of speculation, it's not political conflict that turns off Americans. It's incivility.

And it's not just incivility, but the particular form it takes on television, according to Mutz and Reeves. Television's "sensory realism" makes the shoutfests very much like real-life encounters. But in real life, people who fall into arguments tend before long to back off, physically as well as rhetorically. On talk shows, conflict brings the cameras zooming in for a screen-filling look at the combatants, while the host works to ratchet up the antagonism. It's a "highly unnatural" experience for viewers, and, as the electrodes Mutz and Reeves attached to some viewers showed, one that produces a physiological reaction much like the one created by real conflict. That, the two researchers conclude, is the source of the turnoff: "When political actors . . . violate the norms for everyday, face-to-face discourse, they reaffirm viewers' sense that politicians cannot be counted on to obey the same norms for social behavior by which ordinary citizens abide."

### FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

## *What Does North Korea Want?*

"North Korea's Weapons Quest" by Nicholas Eberstadt, in *The National Interest* (Summer 2005), 1615 L St., N.W., Ste. 1230, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Most discussions of how to deal with North Korea's quest for nuclear weapons begin with the assumption that it's largely a problem of diplomacy. Pyongyang's aim is to obtain as much food, fuel, and other benefits as it can through international blackmail, this logic goes. Indeed, by crying nu-

clear, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il has extracted more than \$1 billion from the United States since 1995. Eberstadt, an American Enterprise Institute scholar, argues that the Communist North Koreans are playing a far more brutal game that many observers recognize.