John H. Hallowell (1914-1991)

John H. Hallowell was on the faculty of the Department of Political Science at Duke University for thirty-nine years, until his retirement in 1982. During that time he published three books, *The Decline of Liberalism as an Ideology* (1943), *Main Currents in Modern Political Thought* (1950), *The Moral Foundations of Democracy* (1954), and numerous articles in political thought. At the time of his death, Professor Hallowell, together with Jene Porter, had nearly completed a book-length manuscript covering the classical period of Western political philosophy, entitled *Political Philosophy: The Search for Humanity and Order* (soon to be published). He had served as chair of his department, President of the Southern Political Science Association, and Editor of *The Journal of Politics.* He was also on the Editorial Board of *The Political Science Reviewer.*

In an age where secularism has the status of a cultural religion, it takes courage to speak and write in explicit moral idioms that question the neat and axiomatic stereotypes of the Conventional Wisdom-stereotypes that, as any former student of Professor Hallowell has to know, pervade not only our culture but also our political science profession. In both today, explicit morality tends to represent the same degree of "scandal" that explicit sex does, or at least did until recent years. John Hallowell had both the clarity of vision and the courage to challenge this Conventional Wisdom.

Hallowell managed to avoid the academic prudery that, almost invariably, insists that wisdom can come only from the pens or lips of the academically credentialed, never from those whose less than scholarly styles tend to make us nervous. In a letter I received from him a few years ago, when Jerry Falwell had entered the political fray and popular opinion was sharply divided on him (no one could be neutral on Falwell), Hallowell observed that much of what Mr. Falwell was saying made good solid sense. Few people from *academia*

would have had the courage to make that statement. Professor Hallowell knew very well that the danger in making such an assertion comes not only from those who are clearly *hostile* to your position, but also from those who are inclined to think that you are in their camp! He mentioned to his associates that he was, not infrequently, solicited to submit articles to journals that he considered more ideological than scholarly, more rigid than reflective in their approaches. Although happy to receive journalistic acclaim on subjects his own profession viewed with some equivocation, he was wary of those self-proclaimed "friends" whose responsive chords might be used to bind one's own ideas to fit their more restricted doctrines.

John Hallowell was a moralist in the best and most intellectually responsible sense of that once-honored tradition. As a Christian who seemed to have no difficulty affirming most of the traditional creedal statements of his Anglican background, he could only wince when he heard his own words tossed back at him in an uncomprehending and narrowly dogmatic manner by those claiming to be brothers or sisters in the faith. To be sure, when one has "friends" like these-whether they claim kinship in the name of "Christianity," or "liberalism," or "conservatism," "the right to life," "the right to choice," or "Americanism"-one need have no ideational enemies; although anyone who as a political scientist in the middle of the twentieth century was willing to challenge the professional and cultural icons of secularism, positivism, historicism, scientism, and any of a number of other dominant "isms" of the time was assured of having a number of these also. Despite both his discomforting "allies" and his inevitable detractors, Hallowell's moral conviction remained an integral part of his scholarship, both his writing and his teaching. He refused to accept the ascendant paradigm of his profession, that of personal detachment-which he exposed for its fundamental contradiction: a commitment to non-commitment.

Thus, Professor Hallowell displayed a refreshing measure of courage when it came to dealing with ideological and professional adversaries. But, as a student of all of the classical virtues, he also set a good example of prudence when it came to avoiding counterproductive alliances, or even the unnecessary appearance thereof. As

I was putting together my first *curriculum vita,* in search of my first academic employment, he suggested that, given the secular predisposition of most of the political science profession, I might want to consider leaving *off* my *vita* reference to the fact that I had attended a theological seminary. After going through the awful struggle of trying to decide which would look worse on my *vita,* three years of theological studies or three years of my life conspicuously unaccounted for and therefore presumably in a penal institution, I reluctantly elected to admit of my shadowy theological past.

However, it was John Hallowell's personal courage more than anything else, and even more than any specific thing that he said, that had the greatest impact upon many of his students. In a profession where there were-and still are today-incredible pressures toward premature and dogmatic closure, professionally sanctioned and acclaimed denials of man's moral and spiritual nature, Professor Hallowell unhesitatingly, and sometimes with few standing alongside him, argued forcefully, articulately, with unmistakable conviction, and yet with humility for recognizing and maintaining the metaxic tension as part of the human condition and for keeping the doors of the mind open to intimations and insights long since lost, even before the advent of modernity. (At a recent gathering in honor of Professor Hallowell, one of his former students quipped that, any of his students who, coming late into his seminar, found himself sitting next to Hallowell's lectern and beneath his omnipresent and ever-lengthening cigarette ash, gained a special appreciation of what he meant by "existential tension.") And those who knew him and his wife, Sally, in North Carolina in the midst of the civil rights tensions of the 1960s knew that, for both of them, courage was not only a professional but also a personal way of life.

Professionally, Professor Hallowell was perhaps not so much a creator of new ideas or philosophies as a reviver of nearly lost, but invaluable, old ideas. When, in a phone conversation with him shortly before his death, I mentioned to him that I was addressing in my research the philosophical foundations of values, his response was, "What could you possibly say that Plato hasn't said already?" Professor Hallowell was one who could restate those old ideas and interpret

their significance in a manner that not only provided a prophetic critique of modernity, but that also commanded, with respect and sometimes even understanding, the attention of a good number of people thoroughly steeped in the modern idiom. Thus, he was able to introduce a number of his students and colleagues to some contemporaries-most notably Eric Voegelin and, later, Michael Polanyi-who are rightly described as major creative figures, as well as fellow-challengers of modernity. It should be noted that John Hallowell brought these people and their seminal works to the Duke campus long before there were institutions and societies to give "official" recognition to them. And, in his capacity as Chair of the Lilly Endowment Research Program in Christianity and Politics, he secured the funding for publishing the collection of Polanyian essays, *Intellect and Hope,* edited by Thomas Langford and William Poteat (Duke University Press, 1968).

Professor Hallowell conveyed to his students the invaluable legacy of getting them to open their minds to new visions and providing them with the critical-or "post-critical"—discipline of mind and the moral foundations to enable them to critique their culture and to suggest new directions. Some of his former students have occasionally, wistfully noted that in some respects it would be easier to pass on John Hallowell's legacy had he provided a school of thought to embody and to reiterate. But simultaneously they admit that, to his credit, he did not. He encouraged scholarship, not discipleship.

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, although reports of the demise of the superficialities and false gods of modernity are greatly exaggerated, there is still considerable evidence to suggest that some twentieth century ideologies and orthodoxies have sustained some mortal wounds and that some foundations have been laid for the emergence of visions more adequate for the twenty-first century and more worthy of the august designation of "political philosophy." For this John Hallowell deserves considerable credit.

Walter B. Mead
Department of Political Science
Illinois State University