TERMINAL CASES

Liberalism: Ancient and Modern. By Leo Strauss. (New York: Basic Books, 1968.) Pp. 1x, 276. $8.95.

The End of Liberalism: Ideology, Policy, and the Crisis of Public Authority. By Theodore J. Lowi. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969.) Pp. xiii, 322. $6.95 cloth, $2.50 paper.

The Liberal Mind. By Kenneth R. Minogue. (London: Methuen & Co., 1963; New York: Random House, 1968.) Pp. vii, 206. $4.95 cloth, $1.95 paper.

Three disparate pieces on liberalism-not yet elegies, not yet epitaphs chiselled on headstones. Each still testifies to the presence of more than its author's talent. Each is evidence of the persistence of a creed, a tired formula of tired men. Perceived in the rubble, picked up, these books now seem much like found objects somehow assembled for review, only tenuously connected by the key term in their titles, Leo Strauss's title barely containing the mixture of essays he has decided to reissue, Theodore Lowi's proclaiming the death of the very ideas to which the book itself remains alive, and Kenneth Minogue's magnanimously referring to a frame of mind, making the fewest demands on credulity. The rule of law, liberal education, *Schechter Poultry Corporation vs. United States,* common sense, the Victorian study, right to counsel, fair play, Locke's *Second Treatise,* privacy, Robert's *Rules, civil* service-all emblems, symbols, icons, not yet crazy or untimely or pathetic, all vaguely serviceable, reminding us that American justice was done (will still be done, surely) in Chicago, Harlem, Saigon, Dallas,, Selma, Trenton-or in quieter no less lethal places, in solitary at San Quentin, a ward of Bellevue, "Principles of Educational Fundamentals" at the University of Minnesota, a bituminous coal mine in West Virginia, a martial court at Schofield Barracks, a stockholders meeting of General Electric, a living room off Central Park South. None of these is final. For each, there are still courts of appeal. There remains a surfeit of administrative remedies, presidential commissions, congressional elections, study groups, teach-ins, *New York Times* ads, prayers. And to come up with further cause for praise, one might travel abroad where even the relics of liberalism would be a blessing, its iconography less ambiguous there, its very posture an intolerable em-

existing not in some ontological heaven but in our midst here and now-are *liberals* who favor a universal and homogeneous state even as they argue for heterogeneity and decentralization, *communists* who resemble liberals but go about their work in an undemocratic, even violent manner, and *conservatives* who incline toward diversity in "language, folk songs, pottery, and the like," who are distinguished by their hostility to change and their distrust of reason-reason being universal while conservatives remain attracted by the particular. This tidy scheme, Strauss lets us learn, arrests the tremors of our times and enables us to compose ourselves. "The conservatism of our age is identical with what originally was liberalism.... One could go further and say that much of what goes now by the name of conservatism has in the last analysis a common root with present-day liberalism and even with Communism." Though Strauss does not presume to offer the last analysis, he finally has a label for the current liberalism-conservatism blend: modernity. What is not modern is of course ancient, and what is ancient emerges as Strauss's home territory-authentic, original liberalism-a standard allowing him to judge contemporary styles, the styles of social science, of education, of being religious.

The liberalism of the ancients is exemplary. The true liberal, Strauss says, "is identical with the genuinely virtuous man." He seeks the good, deplores the universal and homogeneous state, supports the city as a limited, closed society, and appreciates the rewards of civil ways of speaking, writing, and philosophizing.

In possession of his standard--one said to permeate the whole of classical Western political philosophy-Strauss can quietly meditate on the world of phenomena without drifting or sinking. His baseline is secure, embedded in the very nature of things-simply *there-drawn* by no one at all, inhering in Greek thought and in the minds of those few who honor the tradition by continuing it. Since Strauss declines to raise his voice so as to defend his standard, we are not likely to be antagonized by the ideological content or the polemical thrust of his work. This has its rhetorical advantages, but as philosophy, as a critical probing and refining of opinion, it is too even-toned, too slack, to be compelling. We are not antagonized, but neither are we disturbed or surprised.

It is not entirely Strauss's fault that *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern is* free from surprises. With but two exceptions, it reprints previously published articles, monographs, and addresses. It begins

arrogantly, assertively ("Liberalism is education in culture or toward culture") And it ends abruptly with a touch of modernity : a frozen movie frame, a scholarly reference tossed off and locked in parentheses as if author, editor, and publisher wanted to encourage readers to complete abandoned work, to go on to the index, a chaos of names from Achad ha-Am to Xenophon, a continuous challenge to those who remain secure.

But there are stunning exceptions, Strauss doing precisely what he has taught others to expect, providing fully what are merely token performances when done by his students, by scholars who display more gravity than seriousness. Without straining, with measured, painstaking exactness, he makes his way through the *Minos,* through Marsilius's *Defender,* through Lucretius's work, through *The Guide of the Perplexed* (Maimonides, *not* Strauss, calling it "a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which are locked").

There are pleasures in following Strauss, watching him try to adhere to his own impossible standard. His "Notes on Lucretius," for example, try to stay as consistently close to the subject as he insists we must if we are to understand Lucretius as he understood himself. Strauss would seem to be fully *attached,* easily moving himself to accept the whole of Lucretius's work. He almost succeeds, understanding not in order to be edifying or useful, not to make a point, only to understand. His posture is maternal, disarming, self-denying. He seems to be altogether open to the subject matter before him, taking care to save *all* of it, realizing, as he says, that "all evils are in a sense necessary if there is to be understanding," acting "entirely independent of whether what we understand primarily is pleasing or displeasing, fair or ugly," theorizing so that even asides find their place until, in the end, we *see.*

Thus Strauss proceeds to immerse himself, suspending aesthetic and moral judgment-and of course not making it. His "notes" seem to be so ungrudgingly affectionate and respectful that we scarcely realize what has happened, what Strauss has permitted to happen-the establishment of Lucretius as creator of a doctrine rather than of a poem. Strauss will not admit to reviewing merely part of the whole, to seeing Lucretius's conclusions rather than the poetic form which holds them. He lets us assume that he has truly seen all there is even though he never does turn Lucretius's work askew (as one might tilt a painting) to disclose its incon-

elusive form. He does nothing to make its magnificent cadences and silences available. In Strauss's hands-the hands as unobtrusive as the measures of survey analysis-On *the Nature of Things is* simply the crystallized expression of a doctrine-Epicurean philosophy. We learn to respect conclusions as if they were like the "findings" of social science, but learn nothing about the *way* they were found and crystallized. Results matter, not process. We learn that the center is Lucretius's overriding conviction: whatever is truly lovable is necessarily perishable and fragile, and what a priesthood proclaims to be permanent-Eternal Verities-cannot be worthy of our love. Strauss draws all this out in such detail and with such solicitude that we never doubt that this message is the very essence of the poem, that Strauss has captured and displayed the whole of it. 'Convinced that he is engaged by its full range and depth, we hardly realize that the work being presented is but represented, placed tendentiously, exhibited as part of a line. It becomes an unintended introduction (no less, but also no more) to modernity, to Machiavelli, Spinoza, Bacon, Hobbes, and Nietzsche (not to add the names of their twentieth-century partisans and vulgarizers). Strauss ultimately lets us see the entire tribe of self-aggrandizing humanists who have shaken the powers of heaven-nerveless killers of the dream, anthropocentric relativists, protean makers of man and his city, evil fabricators of things lovable, creators of myth, history, and social science.

But in Lucretius, Strauss allows by his very attentiveness, the form redeems. The horror of the message is deflected. The poetry (so unlike the prose form of a social science which accepts the poet's relativism) is "bright and sweet." Lucretius offers his doctrine, Strauss says, "like a physician who attempts to give children repulsive wormwood to drink and first touches the rim of the cup with sweet honey." If all of creation is perishable, as Lucretius affirms, and if in the end, when a plague is upon us, we cannot be consoled by any appeal to supernatural truth, it remains undeniable that the poem is durable, a sweet triumph (merely human) over the. forces of nature, surviving its explicit dismal message and its legions of academic interpreters, commanding each of its readers, including Strauss, to treat it with affection even while they may loathe the man-centered, self-celebrating liberalism which it establishes.

Near silence (where I am), one would like to learn more from

Strauss, more about ourselves, our current condition. But he will not help by taking pains to define his standard. Nor will he assent to man's experience so comprehensively that we might perceive more of it than we could without his vision. To be sure, he has taken time, his time, to confront Lucretius (as he has confronted Machiavelli and Hobbes). If he will never give each of them their due (who will?) he at least lets them speak, brings them into the open. But when seeking to face up to the unholy present, he will not act to save it, to express its forms, to discern its distinctive voice. Devoting thirteen pages of what is after all *his* book to some such contrivance as a Jewish-Protestant Colloquium sponsored by the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, he can merely assert that today authority is lost, tradition subverted : the masses have crashed in while servile philosophers have degraded authentic liberalism so as to make it accommodate the limited moral capacities of the demos. Modern men exist in a state of disorder:

> Deferring to nothing higher than their selves, they lack guidance. They lack thought and discipline. Instead they have what they call sincerity. Whether sincerity as they understand it is necessary must be left open until one knows whether sincerity is inseparable from shamelessness; sincerity is surely not sufficient; it fulfills itself complete in shrill and ugly screams, and such screams are not works of art.

A lament, no more. Letting abstract nouns do major work ("positivism rejects," we are told, as if positivism were a personality all of one piece), Strauss counts on sympathies which are hard to share, using a language no longer usable:

> The "self" is obviously a descendant of the soul; that is, it is not the soul. The soul may be responsible for its being good or bad, but it is not responsible for its being a soul; of the self, on the other hand, it is not certain whether it is not a self by virtue of its own effort. The soul is a part of an order which does not originate in the soul; of the self it is not certain whether it is a part of an order which does not originate in the self.

My point is not, of course, that this vision of a natural hierarchy is meaningless in the context of which I have deprived it, but rather that Strauss's terms are no longer telling. Rome, he has

said, is burning, and men are fiddling. Yet neither his prose nor his voice can integrate our awful experience and give direction to our lives. There is but the sincere *promise* of explicit theory, the *possibility* of seriousness of purpose in the midst of fire and squalor.

This remains an attractive posture, but no longer one yielding sufficient usable substance and texture to win adherents, to endow a school. There may be disciples, but they lack Strauss's strength to *respect* philosophers who give us wormwood to drink. For the disaffected and the unconvinced, Strauss's tone, scruple, rigor, and exactitude are but luminous signals, too empty to transform the meaninglessness which Lucretius's forms succeeded in containing. Strauss is silent about terrors which can be managed, if at all, only by celebrating them. He fails to quote Lucretius's lines that are now an unconscious part of every schoolboy's genetic code-Lucretius's impious sanctification of a universe in which "the systems and their suns shall go back slowly to the eternal drift," in which "nothing abides" and "all things flow . . . until we know and name them."

"... until we know and name them." Lucretius's vision has become compelling : we are all beginning to *see.* We acknowledge that the world "out there" is radically ambiguous, "a monster of energy, without beginning or end" (Nietzsche), a "meaningless sequence of forces" (Henry Adams) , an "absurd malady" (Camus) , and that man alone calls things good and evil, goods and evils being merely so called. If this vision is liberating-freeing us to name things, to make things up, to cerate man and society, to design reality-it also imposes responsibilities for which nothing in the discipline of American political science equips us. Certainly nothing in its current rhetoric, curriculum, and paradigmatic imperatives provides a foundation for facing what Theodore Lowi refers to as "the crisis of public authority." Aware of the dimensions of the crisis, we realize how pathetic it is to think that American political science can help us maintain our composure. Our predicament emerges more bluntly as we seek to confront the center of what Lowi's phrase-already smooth-merely intimates: not merely the end of the great liberal formula of the Eigh-

teenth Century but a timeless void-a meaningless churning of elements, God and grammar as irretrivably discredited as their defenders. Without clerics, commisars, teachers, judges, officers, presidents, and guardians, how does one maintain one's balance? What words, short of those found by Lucretius, can contain the fluidities of our experience so that we can cease being contained and molded by the power of technologies and bureaucracies and begin to govern ourselves?

I realize that these inflated questions provide a setting for Lowi's *End of Liberalism* all out of proportion to his aims. Lowi's book, his *discipline,* does not presume to arrest us, to make us turn our heads, to take us out of our minds. Thus the surprise is not so much that Lowi should fail to sound the depths as that he should point to their existence at all. For he *knows* what kind of sounding out is needed. He knows (and says) that the policies of the modern liberal state are "self-defeating" and that its ideology is "outmoded," that contemporary political theory is "bad ideology" and that the "first premises" of his discipline are not viable. Our government, he says, is both "a gigantic prehistoric beast, all power and no efficacy" and a regime "without definition, finesse, discrimination." There is no prefatory constraint: he would seem to share the belief expressed by Daniel Berrigan, the belief that "practically nothing of traditional civilized structures is functioning for human welfare. This is true of medicine, education, communication, arts, the Church, and indeed, God help us, the courts." The *whole* of the American political order would seem to have lost its legitimacy. Lowi's prospectus is explicit: "the entire *rnodus operandi* of power must be called into question."

Lowi is clearly aware not only of the way things have gone wrong where technology is developed and men of good will have sought to create and maintain a political culture. He is also aware of the debilitating constraints of his academic discipline, the way his own feelings are filtered through the acceptable texture and language of American political science, past the dismal insinuations of legions of scholars (myself not excluded) whom he thanks in his preface for helping him find his voice.

I have previously reviewed *The End of Liberalism* without harming it and may, by putting it in double jeopardy, give it another boost by reiterating (with the permission of the editor of *The Nation)* that it is an innovative text, readable, engagingly

opinionated, and efficiently organized. Given these sentiments of mine, Lowi should not mind that I take this opportunity to repeat myself, and to add that his book now emerges in the midst of others which acknowledge and reprint and cite him-texts such as George D. Beam's *Usual Politics* (1970), Richard E. Morgan's and James E. Connor's *American Political System* (1971), Milton C. Cumming's and David Wise's *Democracy Under Pressure* (1971), or Duane Lockard's *Perverted Priorities of American Politics* (1971). His success is fitting, wholly congruent with the effort of political scientists to speak about unspeakable affairs. It has suddenly become profitable to come to terms with a new order of facts of American life: we may now be shown in ever greater detail that the conventional model of pluralism is no longer capable of persuading anyone that America is the just society in operation.

Aided by the perspectives of C. Wright Mills, Hans J. Morgenthau, and Grant McConnell, Lowi certainly has no difficulty summing up, demonstrating that even while government organized on the basis of what he calls interest-group liberalism can respond to social needs by activating itself, it cannot coordinate and focus its efforts. It cannot plan. Its power, though massive and dynamic, is delegated, dispersed, diffused, and ultimately exhausted. Recapitulating familiar studies, his own included, he tells us that Congress, for example, may wish to direct television broadcasters to act in specified ways; but, unable clearly to articulate its wish, it will delegate power to the FCC which, in turn, succumbs to the needs of the most established sector of the broadcasting industry.

As governmental power is emasculated, private power is enhanced. Policy objectives not being formulated at the center of government, they are informally defined at the margins of the administrative process-and erode. Private groups make public law. Institutions. of popular control atrophy; old structures of privilege are maintained; adjustment to new social pressures is retarded. A pluralistic system-one within which public policy originates at the top of private hierarchies of power-operates against the emergence of those laws which might give form and focus to common enterprises. As a result, domestic policy is characterized (the phrase is James MacGregor Burn's) by drift and deadlock whereas foreign policy remains a sequence of incoherent *ad hoc* reactions unconvincingly rationalized by spongy rhetoric. The problems posed by inner-city ghettos, racial conflict, income inequality,

and international anarchy defy the framework of interest-group liberalism.

Given Lowi's perceptions, one might expect him to probe the foundation of American constitutionalism as well as the "first premises" of his discipline. But saying no more than might be said in opposition to the ideology embedded in David Truman's *Governmental Process,* committed to the use of the same words and the same research techniques, he makes it as easy for his readers to anticipate his conclusions as for him to offer them. He exhorts us to recover our devotion to formal institutions. We must respect clearly articulated law and somehow get back to explicit standards. At a minimum, we must agree with the Supreme Court which rejected "unconfined and vagrant" power in the Schechter case, underwrite "a truly independent and integrated administrative class-a Senior Civil Service," trust that "elite of formal office-holders" whose credentials were estabilshed by the "exemplary" way it has conducted foreign affairs form the time of the Truman Doctrine to the present.

Having completed the tour of America conducted by Lowi, we find it easy finally to relax and regain our balance. Our rage can be contained. To overcome our unformed sense of disaster, we need merely rehabilitate what Lowi calls alternatively "democratic formalism" and "juridical democracy"-the latter capitalized.

That his prescription-basically his plea for formalizing the procedures of government-should suggest a return to traditional constitutional principles is not surprising : he allows for no theory for transcending the present state of affairs. Louis Hartz's story of America's inarticulate consensus is but reconfirmed.

To what theory, after all, can Lowi appeal? "Lenin arise ! They have gone mad!", students sprayed on the walls of the buildings of central Prague when interrogators and judges were arrested to be interrogated and judged. But what can Americans do when outraged by inane policies and ungovernable bureaucracies? What patron can they summon? How meaningful is an appeal to Madison? Or to Washington? To which father, which authority, can they turn? Lowi, in any event, has no words-no dialectic-for putting "the entire *modus operandi* of power ... into question." He remains in the sacred circle. Held in check by the heavy diction of political science, he can do nothing to expand our knowledge of political possibilities, to challenge the dominant

understanding of the meaning of our public life. It is but a surplus of his own energy and wit which leads him to characterize his hope for the restoration of the rule of law as "radical reform."

Like others offering attenuated criticism and revised texts, Lowi does not find himself at the edge where the world appears more disjointed and language is harder to come by. He is not unnerved by a view of insurgents whose outbrusts cannot be checked and balanced by "the rule of law," by a civil service, and by an astringent supreme court to which Lowi leaves it to "produce the future theory of liberalism." Because, as he says, "the political theories that regimes and revolutions are made of are not written in academe," he in the end turns to the U.S. Supreme Court and urges it to systematize and propagate theory. Adversary proceedings, juridical contests between elites of established groups, seem to have been sufficient to generate governing principles since the founding of the Republic. No wonder, then, that however impassioned, Lowi does not venture to theorize, to comprehend the inner shape and structure of his discontents, to reach for a formula capacious enough to include advocates of willful spontaneity as well as fanatics hysterically lashing back. He ventures nothing like an essay on liberation or *(pace* Robert Paul Wolff) a new groundwork of the metaphysics of the state. In touch with the center of America, he does not presume to offer the vision to move beyond our current maladies toward a community within which more interests might be integrated without being assimilated-that is, esteemed for what they are.

Immersed in immediacy, he offers data, follows with interpretation, and appends his still-born prescription. While his outraged tone reveals the tension between his moral sensibilities and the logic of his work, we are not led to sympathize with him-for he has surely found *his* formula. But to read him is to gain in sympathy for others who occupy different enclosures: his inarticulate tensions are becoming characteristically American. Although Lowi manages well enough, others fail, dread life, and find no vocabulary and no legitimate outlets-no courts of appeal, no platforms, no publishers-to keep their spirits up.

The limits of Lowi's work may help make clear what it would mean-what it would *cost-not* to resign oneself to them. They show the price which must be paid for formulating perspectives-models, metaphors, languages, forms, conceptual frameworks-that

might enable us to perceive and manage unacknowledged, repressed dimensions in society, to identify the contours and meaning of political life below the surface. Admittedly, ventures to locate such unfamiliar reservoirs of unused power, unfelt interests, and nondecisions would be costly. Protected by the dominant ideology, haunted by the specter of Jacobinism, entranced by structure-function analysis, contemporary political scientists are hardly disposed to look beneath the accredited structures of power. Instead, they look for dismal facts and readily find them: the triumph of the will, formless social convulsions, dysfunctional variables. But they have yet to acknowledge that facts are constructed, that less affection for success can give credence to failure, to those potentialities for political order which Aristotle was only the first to define.

My point is not that the protean willfulness of romantics-the alleged incarnation of evil-promises the best. Nor is it simply that our capacity for dedication, loyalty, idealism, and compassion remains unused. Rather, it is that the worst *and* the best-lives unlived-have acknowledged political structures. Of course there is no final formula which might reveal how many impulses-how many eccentric, romantic commitments-may safely be recognized and permitted to flow in the channels of politics. But we might yet risk saying clearly that our common life would be enriched were we capable of bringing the disciplines and styles of outsiders into the present balance of interests, were we psychologically prepared to enlarge politics by including those seemingly apolitical men whose very posture acquires political meaning when understood as a protest against the failure of politics, the lack of community.

Although Lowi has no trouble discussing the disaffected who are not engaged politically, his categories do not establish them as eloquently awkward, as expressive carriers of experiences which insiders might profitably recognize, which would nourish politics by making politics at once more difficult and more pleasurable to bear-provided we can bear new forms at all. His perspective fails to give a place to men who hunger for mutual respect and recognition, who rightly seek to test more of themselves than can be seen at the top and center of America.

Until we have the self-esteem to risk using words which make it legitimate for frustrated and frantic men to share the pleasures

of participation, to bring their impulses under control and gain in composure, we will remain dumbfounded victims of the situation evoked by Lowi's work. We will feel the crisis to which the subtitle of his book refers, but will not grasp its meaning and cannot come to terms with it. Forever enrolled in introductory courses, we will be sensitive to the established facts, the rules rather than the exceptions, the decisions made rather than losses suffered. But in the absence of metaphors which enable us to save appearances and establish new realities, we cannot succeed in making one another aware of the life we fail to live, of the politics we might yet experience.

III

Understandably, one reaches for what one can grasp, for what is available and familiar. And for those who remain sensible-judicious, clear-sighted, unblinded by injustice, knowing that the anarchy which is loosed upon the world may yet by checked by good sense and an honest constabulary, that (Yeats notwithstanding) the center will hold-there is *English* prose. The trim volume by Kenneth R. Minogue provides relief. His commitment to an easily flowing syntax softens all possibilities of rage: there are no verbal overflows, no polymorphic perversities, no flourishes or purple passages, nothing teasing or tricky or fruity or cracked. Here is a language one can *trust.* We are sustained-gently moved along-by the idiom of the London School of Economics (c. 1950), safely this side of Joyce and Burgess, removed even from the passionate frigidity-the. passion--of Hobbes or Bentham. There is comfort in so much good sense, in the easy detachment from gritty specifics. Liberalism is sighted, bagged, and disposed of with little effort, with a complacency (we move among slow burning pipe smokers) justified by the awareness that, though liberals are often benighted, they do after all share one's hostility to the suffering of animals.

If Minogue has little trouble disposing of liberalism, this is because he has even less identifying it. It is a case of instant recognition. He says that a case, a fair case, could be made "for John Locke as its founding father." But he declines to make such a case, or any other. In Minogue's relaxed account, liberalism is a marvelous amalgam, an often touching blend of attitude, doe-

trine, philosophy, ideology, hope, and theory, a set of political arrangements, a social movement, a distinctive political type, "a single entity," the whole of it poised to absorb socialists and capitalists, providing "a moral and political consensus which unites virtually all of us, excepting only a few palpable eccentrics on the right and communists on the left." In its current form, it is both individualistic and statist, permissive and paternalistic-"an intellectual compromise so extensive that it includes most of the guiding beliefs of modern western opinion." It would be querulous to inquire what it means to assume that liberalism has some sort of objective existence, that it really is somewhere out there, possessing a unity of its own, constituting, as Minogue says, "a single tradition of thought." It simply presents itself to the scholar who attends to the voices of time past, who *knows* foreground from background, true traditions from false ones, reality from illusion. Wholly attuned to history, he can tell what liberalism really is, reflect on The Liberal Mind, describe its attributes, dispositions, dynamics, and excesses.

Especially its excesses. Minogue sees liberalism as the agent transforming politics from a mediating, harmonizing activity into a goal-oriented quest. It makes politics a technical discipline for the efficient realization of social objectives, for the sake of survival and need satisfaction. Committing the resources of the liberal state to achieve popularly demanded objectives, the liberal politician ultimately becomes inflexible. Liberal governments, "it follows logically," become coercive. They must finally "control the climate of thought" and "engage in large-scale and protracted repression in order to keep the populace consistent with what it seemed to want some time in the past." That good intentions become doctrinaire and oppressive in the liberal society is due to its internal contradiction: "For liberals are simultaneously to be found praising variety and indeed eccentricity of opinion and behavior; and gnawing industriously away at the many sources of variety in an attempt to provide every man, woman, child and dog with the conditions of a good life." It is this industrious gnawing which determines the course of events, leading to the illiberal society. Minogue's statement of the historical tendencies typical of the liberal state is offered less as a theory of development than as a characterization of the static essence, the very idea, of liberalism: "For liberalism is goodwill turned doctrinaire; it is

philanthropy organized to be efficient." It is the spectral object of a form of the verb "to be," nothing less in the final analysis than comprehensive statism.

Liberalism is given a messianic thrust and direction by its unlimited sympathy for victims, for "noble savages, innocent children, uncorrupted proletarians, freedom-loving strugglers for national independence." The liberal, who sees himself as "a disinterested force for good," treats these as victims of a social environment which must be changed at all costs. What the liberal assails-and I am still moving within Minogue's construction-are the social institutions which keep victims in a condition of servitude. Accordingly, the liberal is driven to flatten out hierarchies of power. The noxious results have been made familiar by the defenders of pluralism ranging from Alexis de Tocqueville to Daniel Bell. In Minogue's no longer novel terms, the erosion of traditional hierarchies produces a dehumanized mass. Men crave the full life promised by the model of romanticism as implemented by political liberalism-nothing less than the full development of everyone's unlimited potentialities. Men follow their impulses, seek to throw off their chains, and (children of Rousseau) assert their rights. The full-scale translation of romanticism into politics means the destruction of all cultural values. In the end, it means totalitarian standardization. Public policy will prescribe "floorspace areas and the nutritional minima of the full life." The state will "standardize" spiritual experiences, like love, marriage, intellectual cultivation, and friendship." Where such statism is in fact not achieved, that elastic abstraction known as "the liberal" is impelled by the inner logic of his creed to bring it about. He simply inquires to what extent the full life is not lived, and converts specific responses into his positive program.

That it is no longer. possible to state Minogue's position in arresting phrases (Tocqueville was here, and so were Ortega, Talmon, Nisbet, Arendt, Lederer, Drucker, Hallowell, and Kornhauser) is no argument against it. Nor need one hold it against Minogue that he fails to consider alternatives. True, we might be interested in learning whether the equalitarian ideals of liberalism must be discredited because the French Revolution enthroned the General Will and destroyed opposing hierarchies or because the revolutionary ideal remain unfulfilled. Are the barbarian traits attributed to the masses by the apologists for pluralism possibly due to out-

dated policies of governments suitable for an age of village life, small-scale farming, family workshops, independent newspapers, militant trade unions, and competitive private business? Yet Minogue's neglect of this question is not finally serious, for it merely offends that canon of scholarship which demands that propositions be tested against alternatives. The trouble, I think, is more basic, affecting not merely scholarship but human enterprises in general. It lies in Minogue's lack of self-consciousness, his offering a conceit without the saving knowledge that this defines precisely what he is doing. In Minogue's volume there is no hint that "the liberal mind" is *his* fiction, Kenneth Minogue's own ingeniuous contrivance, his plaything, his achievement-and (the implication is painful to acknowledge) that there may yet be other fictons. If professors fantasize, so it is timely to announce, others can too. But to acknowledge that more of us may play, to encourage others to crash the academic party, requires a manner alien to Minogue, a messier rhetoric, less shame, a language designed to show that part of life is absent, a generous allowance for subplots, options, ironies, negations, disappointments, subversions, a readiness to reveal one's false starts, retreats, and new beginnings. Those who write as nicely as Minogue risk no contradictions. Each of their hesitancies is planned, injected to persuade. Without strident insisting (there is no vulgarity here), they *know.* They betray no trace of bewilderment or embarrassment, only a practical demonstration of the most insidious of all forms of autocratic rule, the kind of certitude which allows that one must of course be tolerant of the foolishness of others, that, yes indeed, o:ie shares a measure of their guilt. Absolution could cost no less.

IV

It hardly needs saying that whatever the actual political situation today, the three volumes I have been turning over in my hands and in my mind fail to touch its vital parts. There is nothing like Sue Walker's superb photograph facing the title page of Dolbeare's and Edelman's *American Politics-a* photo of the Stars and Stripes, clear but *out of focus* (but where are the blurred photos of "America Votes" or "The President Informs the Nation" or "Congress Declares War"?). All we get is three authors insinuating that their analyses are somehow relevant not to the dislocations

of the moment but to central, deeper troubles, the insistence of three true liberals that current experiences are symptoms of the disdain for "classical virtue," of the lack of "democratic formalism," or of the failure to sustain a posture displacing the excesses of the "liberal mind." But to what extent can the angle of vision defined by these phrases make our lives less incongruous and our public predicaments more manageable? Are the words not unhinged from experience we vaguely feel is ours, but is yet not quite ours because not brought to numbers, not caught in words, not *related?* Given the ambition betrayed by such titles as *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern, The End of Liberalism,* and *The Liberal Mind, it* is fair enough, I would think, for me to raise the grandiose questions they beg, to put these volumes into the high-sounding context they demand for themselves.

This context has become easier to define of late. Partially this is because of the felt shrinkage of political time and space-of public arenas in which men can make significant appearances-and partially because of the emergence of symbolic forms that express (fustian phrase) the agonies of the age. I am referring to the odd forms of MacLuhan, the epigrammatic ejaculations of E. M. Cioran, the self-interrogations of Kenneth Lifton and Robert Coles, the ironic constructions of Max Weber, the desperate wit of Veblen and Galbraith, the baroque architecture of Norman Mailer. Further out, there are the public arts of Fellini, Cage, Sartre, Mishima, and Berrigan; and yet further out (scarcely visible as deliberate appearances), an array of happenings, performances, incursions, trials, simulations, and probes, the spectacles of dispatched B-52s, of Governor Wallace visiting with Lieutenant Calley, of students rifling confidential files, of favored citizens touring military installations, of Luftwaffe transports flying out of El Paso, of political scientists solemnly resolving to call for a moratorium on all research, of selective service boards resigning because draftees must be free to waste noncombatents, of teargas drifting into Georgetown and war protestors toward the arteries of the Capitol. If these are new performances in newly created public spaces on which to give shape to the possibilities of self, sex, war, and riots, they have scarcely been perceived as such. Efforts *on all sides* to demonstrate and to signal, they have not been comprehended as *forms* of communication, as efforts to display tacit dimensions of life on expanding stages. Calling attention (living

theater designed near breathless desperation) to something transcending the visible and the audible, they are not seen as inducing men to become alert and to listen, to distrust familiar voices, to hear some unsung melody, some order beneath the hysteria, beneath my scrambled metaphors.

Need I insist that it is no longer necessary to look hard (Harold Rosenberg has recently done so in *Act and the Actor) to* see the lowering of the barrier between life and art? With pleasure or distaste, we witness the expansion of "man-made environments," the insertion of "real life" into everyone's curriculum, the enlargement of the economy, the eclipse of distance (as Daniel Bell has called it), the ascendancy of technique, the emergence of Apollo. Nietzsche had prophesied as much, defining the parameters of the new season. Freud helped, as did Marx : they directed ego to usurp it and expected that unalienated men would at last begin to make their own history. Today, there are not a few individuals who know in some area between throat and heart precisely what they mean when they say to one another that they are *here,* or that *this is* where it's at. A new breed of men is beginning to realize where and how it is, achieving a new ground for being, a new context yet to be defined. Some men are beginning to sound it out, to hold it (almost hold it) with the slippery words supplied by R. D. Laing, Norman O. Brown, Herbert Marcuse, Andre Malraux, Charles A. Reich, or Carlos Castaneda-mythmakers all in a world destroyed by others in possession of truth.

But nothing said by Strauss, Lowi, or Minogue (good company after all) will evoke the new context, will tease out the living form beneath the explosions and implosions of the present. For all their concern with the present (Strauss most intensively), they do not allow themsleves to feel *it,* to compare it, to say what it's *like.* They decline to relate the familiar to the ostensibly ungoverned spaces in which man is in agony, in which he shows himself to be neither beast nor god. All three are walkers in the city of today, but none let on that they experience *it.* As they write their accounts, they cover their tracks, erase their little errors. They emerge tearless, unstained, easily in control, moving in well-shaped circles, gladly commanded by a discipline that enables them to be chaste and undistracted even as their academic rituals have worn thin.

To be sure, outside their rhetoric and outside their universities

some traditions remain viable. In at least some parts of the world some old discipline continues to appeal: "Lenin awake!" But what authority can be summoned in a self-accelerating post-industrial society whose run-away bureaucracy has no memory, no patron saint? When men are done with the traditions, rituals, languages, and values taken for granted by Strauss, Lowi, and Minogue, what can restore structure, authority, form, discipline, order, decorum, civility? Whose wisdom, whose common sense, remains usable? Peter Marin is right: "There is nothing to ground or hold us, imagination reigns and we begin haltingly, confusedly, to live out our dreams."

Yet if our imagination is not simply wild, if our dreams have structure, this is still to be made politically relevant. Man's nature-the *constitution of* his very body-remains to be converted into political structures and shared commitments, into policies and languages likely to connect our various possibilities. But it is becoming self-destructive to assume that either liberalism or its ambivalent critics can help. If in fact three quite diverse authors cannot act to acknowledge the barely formed symbolic structures of the present, the fault is not entirely theirs, and one should be grateful, as I am, for their mere tenacity and talent-Strauss's for being attached to his distinctive vision, Lowi's for staying in touch with his professional colleagues, Minogue's for appearing consistently literate and intelligent. If, lacking words, they are victims at the end of a line, there can also be no beginning until we know their troubles.

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