

PETER VIERECK AND THE DEMISE OF NEW CONSERVATISM

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ABSTRACT

Beginning in 1949 Peter Viereck was the first proponent of New Conservatism. By 1962 a completely different concept of conservatism advocated by William F. Buckley, Jr., dominated American conservative politics, and Viereck had virtually abandoned publishing political commentary and disappeared from the discussion of political thought in America. This study proposed to address several questions. Why did Buckley prevail? Why did Viereck withdraw from the political world? Why has Viereck been relegated to relative obscurity? Finally, does Viereck's idea of conservatism have a place in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America?

The first part of the study focuses on political thought, and consists of a brief examination of the tradition of Edmund Burke and the New Humanism of Irving Babbitt, two of the principal intellectual influences on

Viereck, followed by a synopsis of Viereck's historical perspective and his New Conservatism. This part of the study relies on biographical material regarding Burke and his contemporaries, and primary and secondary sources regarding Babbitt and Viereck. The second part of the study focuses on political history, and relies on primary sources, historical accounts and the papers of Buckley and Viereck.

The study demonstrates that events in history do not occur for a single reason, but rather result from a confluence of various actions and external circumstances.

Buckley prevailed because he had charm, zeal, and adaptability in a perfect political environment created by external events. Viereck withdrew because he was, and perceived himself as, a poet and a humanist rather than a political commentator, and because he was unwilling to compromise his principles to remain influential. Viereck was relegated to obscurity because that was Buckley's intent, and because the political environment that facilitated Buckley's ascension was correspondingly hostile to Viereck's ideas.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude for the assistance, and particularly the patience, of Dr. Francis J. Ambrosio, Director of the Doctoral Program in Liberal Studies and Associate Professor at Georgetown University, and Anne Ridder, Assistant Dean and Associate Director of Graduate Liberal Studies Degree Program.

I am appreciative of the participation of the members of the thesis committee, each of who was instrumental in pointing me in the direction that produced this study. In 2007 Dr. Hans Noel, Associate Professor in the Department of Government at Georgetown University, referred me to George Nash's encyclopedic work, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, which inspired my interest in American conservatism. In the same year Dr. Michael Duggan, Adjunct Lecturer in the Graduate Liberal Studies Degree Program, who was then directing my independent study in American Political Thought and who now chairs this committee, told me that I really needed to read this book by someone named Peter

Viereck that he had just read. That book was *Conservatism Revisited*.

I am particularly grateful for the participation of Dr. Claes G. Ryn, Professor in the Department of Politics at the Catholic University of America. Dr. Ryn is the leading authority on Peter Viereck, Irving Babbitt and imaginative conservatism. Dr. Ryn enabled me to immediately develop an outline for this project and made essential suggestions for its content. His guidance was invaluable.

I also wish to thank Christopher Buckley for granting permission to work with the papers of William F. Buckley, Jr., William Massa in the Manuscripts and Archives division of the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University, and the staff at the Rare Books & Manuscript Library at Columbia University.

The final chapter discussing contemporary relevance of Viereck's ideas was inspired by a question posed by my friend, Amy Carter, who asked "What would Viereck have to say about the debate over a woman's choice and the right to life?" I was never able to answer that specific

question, but it generated a hopefully interesting discussion of other recent and current issues.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the inspiration in the pursuit of interdisciplinary studies that the late Dr. Phyllis O'Callaghan, the longtime Director of Graduate Liberal Studies Degree Program at Georgetown University, provided to me and countless others who studied for the sake of knowledge. She was a person of singular intellect, humanity and wit.

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## INTRODUCTION

In *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* George Nash writes that no conservative intellectual force existed in the United States prior to 1945.<sup>1</sup> Nash describes American conservatism as a specific phenomenon in a specific time and place, distinct from European and historical conservatism. Nash identifies three distinct conservative movements that revived or originated after 1945: the "classic liberals" or "libertarians" led by Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises; the "new conservatism" of Peter Viereck, Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver,<sup>2</sup> and others; and "a militant, evangelistic anti-communism" personified by William F. Buckley, Jr. The conflict between these three movements was "the search for an authentically American conservative heritage."<sup>3</sup>

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1. George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945, Thirtieth-Anniversary Edition* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2006).

2. Weaver was an agrarian apologist for the Old South. His brand of cultural conservatism is eccentric.

3. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, xxi.

Viereck authored five books. The first, *Metapolitics*<sup>4</sup> was published in 1941. The second was *Conservatism Revisited*<sup>5</sup> in 1949. The third was *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*<sup>6</sup> in 1953. The final two, *Conservative Thinkers*<sup>7</sup> and *The Unadjusted Man in the Age of Overadjustment*,<sup>8</sup> were published in 1956.

Nash calls Viereck's *Conservatism Revisited* "the first call for a 'new conservatism' in America."<sup>9</sup> Viereck's communitarianism and emphasis on moderation resulted in strident opposition by Buckley, alienation from Kirk, ostracism from the conservative intellectual

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4. Peter Viereck, *Metapolitics: From Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1941), rev. ed. *Metapolitics: From Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler, Expanded Edition* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

5. Peter Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited: The Revolt Against Revolt* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), rev. ed. *Conservatism Revisited: The Revolt Against Ideology* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, rev. ed. 2005).

6. Peter Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953), rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2007).

7. Peter Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers: From John Adams to Winston Churchill* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

8. Peter Viereck, *Unadjusted Man in the Age of Overadjustment: Where History and Literature Intersect* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

9. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 100.

community, and relative obscurity. He abandoned the political arena in the early 1960s. Also a poet and a Russian historian, Viereck came to believe that poetry was a more suitable vehicle for the expression of his humanistic concept of the political.

A full understanding of Viereck's political thought requires consideration of the Burkean tradition and the influence of Edmund Burke and Irving Babbitt on Viereck.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke originated a new way of thinking about politics that linked the interests of society and the human condition as a middle way between Anglo-European Tory conservatism and radical Whig liberal individualism. In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, Irving Babbitt developed Burke's conservatism into the "New Humanism." Viereck's political thought derives from the Burkean tradition and Babbitt's New Humanism. *Conservative Thinkers* was written from the historical perspective, including Viereck's commentaries on Burke and Babbitt. Although among the last of Viereck's

books to be published, *Conservative Thinkers* is a preface to an examination of his political thought.

Burke, Babbitt and Viereck shared intellectual and historical similarities. Each rejected *a priori* principles. Each was essentially an essayist who expressed thoughts on a variety of topics, rather than articulating a body of thought that could be characterized as either political philosophy or political science. There is an resulting inherent difficulty in formulating a concise description of their respective concepts of the political. This is particularly so with respect to Babbitt and Viereck. While Burke spent his life in the political arena, Babbitt and Viereck were both academics, whose fields of expertise were, in the case of Babbitt, Romance languages and French literature, and, in the case of Viereck, Russian history. Babbitt was a cultural critic whose commentary covered a diversity of topics, including art, literature, politics, ethics and religion. Viereck was a literary critic and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet. A statement of the political thought of these practitioners of the liberal arts is somewhat more akin to a cataloguing

of ideas than to a summary of a cohesive intellectual system. However, the essential premises underlying a world view can be extracted from the writings of each.

Another commonality is rejection by contemporaries.<sup>10</sup>

Generally, little has been written about Viereck. Jay Starliper's recently published *Aesthetic Origins*<sup>11</sup> is a comprehensive and clear analysis of Viereck's thought. In the Foreword, Claes Ryn writes:

Not least important is Starliper's philosophical background which enables him to sort through Viereck's often disparate and scattered observations about life and then provide philosophical orderliness, structure and precision that are often lacking in Viereck's own writing.<sup>12</sup>

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10. "Babbitt was criticized at one time or another by a wide variety of influential intellectuals and literary figures. They included Edmund Wilson, H. L. Menken, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, R. P. Blackmur, Arthur Lovejoy, J. E. Spingarn, Alan Tate, and Jacques Barzun." Claes G. Ryn, introduction to *Character & Culture: Essays on East and West* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1995), xxi.

11. Jay Patrick Starliper, *Aesthetic Origins: Peter Viereck and the Imaginative Source of Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2014).

12. Claes G. Ryn, Foreword in Jay Patrick Starliper, *Aesthetic Origins: Peter Viereck and the Imaginative Source of Politics* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2014), xix-xx.

Starliper deals with a paradox: a philosophical treatment of an anti-philosophy.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, his explication of the nature and necessity of moral imagination, that is, the perception of individual experience filtered through an unwritten constitution consisting of values developed by a community over eons, provides the quintessence of Viereck's thought.

In *Buckley*<sup>14</sup> Carl Bogus describes the ascendancy of Buckley's brand of conservatism. Bogus identifies Viereck, Kirk, Robert A. Nisbet and Clinton Rossiter as the "new conservatives" of note.<sup>15</sup> Bogus details Buckley's cooption of Kirk<sup>16</sup> and intimidation of Rossiter, who

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13. Starliper is fully cognizant of the conundrum. He frequently criticizes contradictions, incomplete thoughts, and extravagant language that can be found in Viereck's writings.

See Marie Henault, *Peter Viereck* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969). This short book is principally a study of Viereck's poetry but does discuss Viereck's prose in a cursory fashion. *Ibid.*, 84-105. Henault apparently makes the mistake of anticipating a philosophical system, and is accordingly critical. Conceding that Viereck's prose "made good topical reading," Henault writes "A re-examination, however, shows his writings to be journalistic, not well-argued political or historical works. As good journalism, they are full of fine phrases, crisp summings up, and reiterated ideas." *Ibid.*, 85. A literary critique of Viereck's admittedly "disparate and scattered observations," in Ryn's words, misses the point.

14. Carl T. Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley Jr. and the Rise of American Conservatism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011).

11. *Ibid.*, 110.

16. *Ibid.*, 109-124.

finally took his own life in 1970.<sup>17</sup> Bogus gives no indication of interaction between Buckley and his cohort, on the one hand, and Nisbet, on the other.<sup>18</sup>

Although Nash and Bogus write extensively about Kirk and the relationship between Buckley and Kirk, neither discusses Viereck in detail, or chronicles a relationship between Buckley and Viereck. Bogus notes "a large chasm between Viereck's new conservatism and Buckley's conservatism," but dismisses Viereck as "too idiosyncratic" to be "a satisfactory champion of a political philosophy."<sup>19</sup> Yet, in 2005, the year before his death, the *New Yorker* called Peter Viereck "The First Conservative."

The historical focus on Kirk, himself an eccentric theorist, who accepted the patronage of *National Review*, and the corresponding disregard of Viereck, the originator of the new conservatism, who remained intellectually at odds with Buckleyism, is puzzling at first glance.

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17. Ibid., 126-133.

18. Ibid., 133-137.

19. Ibid., 126.

The relationship between Buckley and Viereck was demonstrably adversarial. In 1951 Viereck wrote a critical, even derisive, review of Buckley's *God and Man at Yale*.<sup>20</sup> Viereck was asked, but declined, to contribute to *National Review*.<sup>21</sup> In 1956 Frank S. Meyer attacked Viereck in the *National Review*.<sup>22</sup> "In 1963, [Buckley] observed that the followers of Clinton Rossiter and Peter Viereck had been successfully sidelined. They were, he wrote with obvious satisfaction 'bound to enter the ranks of eccentricity.'"<sup>23</sup>

Viereck's political thought was, and remains, very different from the "mainstream" conservatism of both Buckley and the contemporary right. Buckley and Meyer advocated *a priori* principles of minimal government, pro-

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20. William F. Buckley, Jr., *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom"* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951). See, Peter Viereck, "Conservatism Under the Elms," review of *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of "Academic Freedom,"* by William F. Buckley Jr., *New York Times*, November 4, 1951. Viereck asked "Has a young St. Paul emerged from the Yale Class of 1950 to bring us the long-awaited Good Tidings of a New Conservatism and Old Morality?" and "And why is this veritable Eagle Scout of moral sternness silent on the moral implications of McCarthyism in his own camp?" *National Review* would later return the favor.

21. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 228.

22. *Ibid.*, 237.

23. Bogus, *Buckley*, 137.

business free market economic theory, and atomistic individualism combined with objective moral values. Buckley and Meyer believed that these ideological values were concrete and universal and could be overlaid upon any situation to dictate a conclusion. The goal of Buckley-Meyer conservatism was the restoration and preservation of the past.<sup>24</sup>

Viereck had a more intricate concept of conservatism. For Viereck, conservatism was not the old versus the new. The object to be conserved was "the sense of higher moral destiny that is the core of Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions."<sup>25</sup> This moral compass is not "an abstract static principle from which prescriptions for different situations can be deduced in a casuistic manner."<sup>26</sup> Solutions emanate from a synthesis of the universal and the particular. Viereck accepted innovation if it reflected the requisite moral values. Meyer and

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24. Meyer is evasive about restoration in his writings. See, 98-100, *infra*.

25. Claes G. Ryn, "Peter Viereck and Conservatism" in *Conservatism Revisited: The Revolt Against Ideology* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 8.

26. *Ibid.*, 13-14.

Buckley, however, saw Viereck as a progressive, even a liberal, and a relativist masquerading as a conservative.

Viereck's identification of the source of this moral sense sets him apart. His perception was framed by his aesthetic nature. Viereck believed that great literature was "the most important bridge" to this moral sense,<sup>27</sup> establishing a nexus between the aesthetic and the political. For both the aesthetic and the political, "Fusing the universal and the particular into the single creative act, the unadjusted imagination concretizes the spiritual, spiritualizes the concrete."<sup>28</sup> Conservatism, for Viereck, was both an intellectual and a moral process.

Viereck's contemporary significance is twofold. First, his criticism of the individualism and rigidity espoused by Buckley is a standard by which conservatism in its current context can be assessed. Second, his foundational premise that conservatism must reflect Christian values and humanism is a potential ideological bridge between various communities of contemporary

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27. Ibid., 10.

28. Ibid., 11, quoting Viereck, *Unadjusted Man*, 332.

political thought, with the caveat that the Christian values urged by Viereck are not a theological imperative, but rather a representation of a universal idea that humanism must transcend secularism.<sup>29</sup>

Viereck's persona, style and ultimate withdrawal from the political arena well may have made Viereck idiosyncratic. Nonetheless, Bogus muses:

There was a moment then, in the mid-1950s, when conservatism stood at a fork in the road. Before it lay two paths: the Burkean road advocated by the new conservatives, and the libertarian path favored by Frank Meyer and, more importantly, by William F. Buckley Jr. Would history have been different if Kirk and the new conservatives stood shoulder by shoulder and fought for the future of the conservative movement? Why did this not happen?<sup>30</sup>

This study proposes to address questions that may provide insight concerning the possibility suggested by Bogus. Why did Buckley prevail? Why did Viereck withdraw from the political world? Why has the "First Conservative" been relegated to relative obscurity? Finally, does Viereck's idea of conservatism have a place in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America?

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29. Viereck, as a defender of a diversity of thought, is presumably not implying that subscription to a Christian, or Judeo-Christian, theology is a prerequisite to humanism or conservatism.

30. Bogus, *Buckley*, 124.

An historical retrospective involves a look at the interaction between Viereck, Kirk and Buckley, and the direction in which Buckley took conservatism.

The contemporary significance of Viereck will be examined by an application of his ideas to issues that have evolved since Viereck's withdrawal from the political arena. Ryn, commenting on Jay Starliper's *Aesthetic Origins*, writes "Because of its varied and many references to issues of the day, much of Viereck's work seems impressionistic or time-bound, but Starliper is able to show that it all emanates from a single coherent view of life."<sup>31</sup> The contemporary political landscape frequently reflects the ideological inflexibility that Viereck deplored. Viereck would clearly reject contemporary neo-conservatism. Where would Viereck stand a half-century later, in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America?

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31. Ryn, Foreword in *Aesthetic Origins*, xx.

## CHAPTER 1.

### EDMUND BURKE AND THE CONSERVATIVE TEMPERAMENT

Edmund Burke may rightfully be considered the unique, and perhaps most important, political thinker of the modern era. Born in Ireland in 1730, the son of a Protestant Dublin attorney and a Catholic from a rural Jacobite family, Burke was raised in middle-class circumstances, and educated in a Quaker school before entering Trinity College. Burke left for London in 1750 and would return to Ireland only three times, although Ireland would always be present in his accent and thoughts. Burke pursued the occupation of a published essayist and journalism, but his career began with his election as a Whig member of Parliament in 1765. He aligned himself with Lord Rockingham's faction in opposition to William Pitt.<sup>1</sup> Burke was:

... a mere salaried secretary. But over time he assumed a crucial role within the Rockingham Whigs, moving them away from factional politics and shaping them organizationally and intellectually into the prototype of the modern political party.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Jesse Norman, *Edmund Burke: The First Conservative* (New York: Basic Books, Perseus Books Group, 2013), 9-55.

2. *Ibid.*, 56.

PART I  
THE BURKEAN TRADITION

Burke would become an advocate for equality for Catholics in Ireland, an opponent of the British oppression of the American colonies, and a persistent and vocal critic of both liberal individualism and abuse of power until his death in 1797.<sup>3</sup>

In the evolution of Anglo-American political thought Burke was preceded by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose ideas are an essential preface to a consideration of Burke.

In 1651 Hobbes, shaken by the regicide of Charles I, wrote *Leviathan*. For Hobbes the essence of government is sovereign power. Hobbes proposed a social contract as the alternative to "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" life in the state of nature. "For Hobbes the social contract was the minimal basis to secure the right of the sovereign to govern."<sup>4</sup> The contract consisted of a voluntary trade of autonomy for security on a "once and

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3. Ibid., 1-2.

4. Ibid., 201.

for all basis."<sup>5</sup> Hobbes proposed a moral, as well as legal, obligation of obedience to the sovereign.

Around 1681 Locke, in the mist of the Exclusion Crisis and the increasing resistance to monarchical absolutism, published *The Second Treatise of Government: An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government*. For Locke the essence of government was the arbitration of competing claims. Locke also postulated a social contract as an alternative to the state of nature. Locke's contract obligated government to provide and safeguard "the means by which man can protect and enjoy his right to life and property."<sup>6</sup> Although Locke referred to liberty and freedom, his context was always that of preservation of property and the anticipation of enlargement of one's estate. Government has no other legitimate purpose for Locke. This contract exists only be virtue of the continuing consent of the governed, and allows for a right of revolt when government no longer meet its obligations. Hobbes provided a system of thought from which the authoritarian component of conservatism

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5. Ibid., 196.

6. Ibid., 201.

emanated. Locke's mercantilism, on the other hand, is a seminal body of thought in the development of classical liberal theory, from which economic libertarianism devolved. Both may be considered progenitors of radical varieties of conservatism, although Locke's theory of popular sovereignty more appropriately establishes Locke's thought as the origin of democratic capitalism.

A century after the publication of *Leviathan*, Rousseau published his *First Discourse*, followed by the *Second Discourse* and, in 1762, the *Social Contract*. Rousseau built on the theories of Hobbes and Locke in that Rousseau also begins with the state of nature. However, Rousseau is a product of the Enlightenment and its concepts of progress, innovation and perfectibility of the individual. Rousseau proposes a third social contract which may be better perceived as the evolution of, rather than an alternative to, the state of nature. "For Rousseau, in thought as in life, man is first and foremost, a creature of nature, a solitary and self-sufficient individual."<sup>7</sup> This individual has absolute

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7. Ibid., 188.

freedom, which permits the exercise of rational choice and imbues the individual with moral autonomy. Rousseau's social contract is the civil society, an artifice by which the individual will and the collective will are made one.<sup>8</sup> This aggregation of individuals is the product of human reason, one manifestation of which is natural compassion. Rousseau's altruistic society is not the submission of the individual to another individual who has a sovereign right to exercise authority. Rather, "in giving himself to all he gives himself to no one."<sup>9</sup> Individual desire becomes congruent with the "general will" of the whole. It is this general will that exercises sovereign power. This compact constantly renewed, was revocable by the general will, and imposed no obligation with regard to either the past or the future. Rousseau also perceived private property as the source of corruption and divisive pride. Rousseau proposed a radical concept of liberal theory that may be considered an origin of either democracy, romanticism, libertarianism, Marxism or contemporary socialism, depending on the analytical perspective.

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8. Ibid., 201.

9. Ibid., 189.

Burke's thought is, perhaps, better understood by contrasting it with that of his contemporary, Thomas Paine. Their respective political ideas represent two very different products of the Enlightenment. "The two men knew each other, met several times, exchanged letters, and publicly answered one another's writings."<sup>10</sup> Paine, whose pamphlet entitled *Common Sense* was a principal intellectual force underlying the separation of the American colonies from England, defined equality and autonomy as the core concepts of the political. Paine, like Rousseau, posited the continuity of the natural equality of individuals. For Paine, unlike Rousseau:

... there is a crucial middle step between the state of nature and the political community: the natural society that exists without government. When humans first gathered into society, the motives and needs that drew them together naturally governed their cooperation, and they achieved a relatively sophisticated degree of social life without a need for government as such. But over time, as they succeeded in overcoming necessity, they relaxed in their duties, and some form of government became necessary to restrain their vices.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Yuval Levin, *The Great Debate: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine and the Birth of Right and Left* (New York: Basic Books, Perseus Books Group, 2014), xv.

11. *Ibid.*, 47. Although Paine is a icon of liberal thought, a "restraint of vices" is an expression of the concept of "original

Paine represents the enlightenment faith in rationality and *a priori* principles, including the laws of nature. Natural society is inherently rational and natural, while government is artificial. "The science of government, therefore, begins from a knowledge of nature through reason, and government can be judged by how effectively it respects man's individual freedom and equality."<sup>12</sup> That is the test of the legitimacy of an existing government. "That means that only power willingly granted is legitimate, and only a government by consent is just."<sup>13</sup> Society precedes government and establishment of a new and better government is a replication of the origin of rational natural society, not a regression to the chaotic individualism of the state of nature.<sup>14</sup> This is the basis of Paine's justification of revolution.

For Paine, revolution itself is rational because only the comprehension of nature through reason nurtured by the Enlightenment has enabled society to clearly perceive the

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sin" and the corrupt nature of man that is a fundamental precept of conservatism.

12. Ibid., 50.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 47.

proper "organizing principles of government" and the imperfections of hereditary authority and Anglo-European forms of government existing everywhere at that time. "In this respect, Paine's revolutionary ethic is indeed progressive, even though it looks back to the very beginning of politics. It understands itself as innovative because he begins from a knowledge of nature that is never before been achieved."<sup>15</sup> Within this framework, Paine sympathized with both the American and French Revolutions with equal fervor. Paine wrote:

But what we see now in the world, from the Revolutions of America and France, are a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man, and combining moral with political happiness and national prosperity.<sup>16</sup>

Paine saw each revolution as a regeneration, not a destruction, of society.

Paine's radical liberalism presents a total rejection of the imperative of Hobbes' social contract, an extension of Locke's theory of the dependency of political

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15. Ibid., 48.

16. Ibid., quoting Thomas Paine, "Rights of Man," *Life and Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Daniel Wheeler (New York: Vincent Parke & Company, 1915), 4:197.

legitimacy on the consent of the governed to a concept of individualism beyond Locke's mercantilism, and a recasting Rousseau's romantic civil society in rationalist terms.

The relevance of history and institutions to political society, and the nature of revolution, are the critical juxtapositions of Paine and Burke. Levin writes:

Paine thus consistently asserts the supremacy of nature (understood in terms of principles accessible to reason) over history (understood as a catalog of human failures to apply the proper principles to politics). The facts that nature teaches us about human beings explain why society came to be, and the natural imperfection of human beings explains why legitimate government is necessary, while the existence of illegitimate government explains why wars, poverty, and endless other troubles have occurred. The solution is to replace illegitimate governments with ones more in line with the emerging understanding of man's nature and thereby to advance the cause of natural peace. And the end of a political revolution, properly understood, is a return to natural society with this purpose in mind.<sup>17</sup>

Edmund Burke thought about government and society in an entirely different and creative way.

Burke's thought draws upon Hobbes' foundational value of civil order and Locke's centrality of property, but not to the extent of Hobbes' authoritarianism or Locke's

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17. Levin, *The Great Debate*, 52.

mercantilism.<sup>18</sup> Just as Hobbes and Locke wrote in reaction to traumatic societal events, Burke will, as a reaction to the French Revolution, emphatically reject Rousseau's civil society, its embodiment of the Enlightenment, and moral autonomy.

Burke departed from Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau in proposing that political thought begins with the existing fact of human society, not with the state of nature.<sup>19</sup> Burke rejected *a priori* principles as a foundation of political thought in favor of experience. Burke relies on instinct, law, and history. Burke believed that a politician was "a philosopher in action."<sup>20</sup> Burke's body of thought is sometimes characterized as inconsistent. However "it is not intended to be a closed and completed body of doctrine; indeed it is anti-ideological in

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18. Burke clearly did not subscribe to Locke's mercantilist concept of the social contract. "Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure -- but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a temporary interest, and to be dissolved at the fancy of the parties." Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 114, quoting "Reflections on the Revolution in France, 1790," in Edmund Burke, *Works*, 8 vols. (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1826), III ff., *passim*.

19. Norman, *Burke*, 198.

20. *Ibid.*, 196.

spirit."<sup>21</sup> Burke was essentially an empiricist, as opposed to a rationalist.

Burke asserted that the purpose of government was not merely to provide security or to protect property, but rather was "to protect and enhance human society."<sup>22</sup> For Burke, human societies are diverse and dynamic, not monolithic or fixed. "But each has a social order, which links people together in an enormous and ever shifting web of institutions, customs, traditions, habits and expectations built up in innumerable interactions over many years."<sup>23</sup> These social orders are not derived from abstract ideas, but evolve. The process is not creation of an overall design or specific plan. "These institutions are ultimately grounded in feeling and emotion"<sup>24</sup> The product includes both rights and duties. Rights include both natural rights, albeit filtered through legal process, and prescriptive rights that accrue

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21. Ibid., 195.

22. Ibid., 197.

23. Ibid., 198.

24. Ibid., 199.

through habit and custom.<sup>25</sup> Burke accepted change as an essential attribute of a healthy society.

English society represented an ideal to Burke. Its principal assets were an aristocracy and constitutional restraint. Although Burke believed that an aristocracy was essential, he believed that an aristocracy should be based on actual virtue, on achievement rather than heredity. Burke's aristocracy was a meritocracy. The constitutional restraint favored by Burke was that of the unwritten British constitution, which originated with *Magna Carta*, and consisted of other legislative acts adopted over time and deemed fundamental to a social order which balanced the interests of the few and the many.<sup>26</sup> This constitution met Burke's litmus test for governance: empirical, evolutionary, and inclusive of both natural and prescriptive rights reflecting collective sentiment. But more was required. Burke believed that the social order also required "manners" that regulate the behavior of all classes of society, essentially consisting of "the spirit

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25. Ibid., 203.

26. Ibid., 208.

of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion.'"<sup>27</sup> A well-ordered society requires a national ethos.

The result of this well-ordered society is true liberty, distinguishable from license which elevates individual will above the good of society.

The perception of ambiguity in Burkean thought may be rooted in Burke's sympathy for the American Revolutions and his abhorrence of the French Revolution. There is no inconsistency. Burke was a Whig. The Whig tradition was the heritage of the Glorious Revolution in 1688, which was viewed as the preservation of society, not as its destruction.<sup>28</sup> Burke saw the American colonists in much the same light, as Englishmen representing traditional rights embodied in the British Constitution, and enhancing an essentially English society. The French Revolution, however, represented a total destruction of the institutions of French society, and was doomed to failure by its want of an anchor to any tradition or set of historical values. To the consternation of many of his

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27. *Ibid.*, 209.

28. Levin, *The Great Debate*, 22.

Whig contemporaries, "In the 1790s, his central and political and intellectual project became the need to prevent the destruction of European society and preserve its institutions against the spread of revolutionary ideas, ...."<sup>29</sup> Central to Burke's critique of the French Revolution was his condemnation of Rousseau's influence, whom Burke described as "'the insane Socrates of the National Assembly.'"<sup>30</sup>

For Viereck, Edmund Burke is the original and quintessential evolutionary conservative. "'A disposition to preserve and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman' That sentence remains the perfect definition of the evolutionary kind of conservative."<sup>31</sup> Viereck's observations regarding Burke as indicative of his own thought.

Reconciling Burke's revulsion at the French Revolution with his admiration of the American colonists, Viereck wrote:

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29. Norman, *Burke*, 191.

30. *Ibid.*, 145.

31. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 27.

Burke distinguished between the two revolutions by the criterion of fidelity to the past. That criterion leads to the question: what relationship should the present have with the past? Here we come to the core of Burke and conservatism: fear of rootlessness.<sup>32</sup>

Burke, like Rousseau, believed in a social contract. However, while Rousseau believed that the contract existed only between those living in the present, Burke asserted that the contract was between the past, the present and the future.

Burke's preferences in the liberties to be defended are a benchmark of conservatism: intellectual liberty (including freedom of the press and of religion) over mass liberty; constitutional liberty over *a priori* liberty; habitual liberty over new liberty; liberty of an intellectual *élite* over irresponsible masses.<sup>33</sup>

Burke extolled the virtue of "prudence" as essential for moderate reform from above. He advocated for an "ethically trained *élite*" and "prejudices" of family,

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32. Ibid., 27. The French Revolution, and ensuing nineteenth century liberal revolutions, were attempts to transplant onto the European Continent English free institutions, embodied in the unwritten British constitution, without the essential historic roots. Ibid., 70. The "revolution" in America emanated from those precise roots, and was a "conservative revolution."

33. Ibid., 29.

religion and aristocracy as necessary to restrain a mankind disabled by original sin. Even external values derived from Christianity required a concrete historic past to be relevant. Finally, Burke was a proponent of the proposition that temperament, not theory or philosophy, is the essence of conservatism. "'No rational man did ever govern himself by abstractions or universal'"<sup>34</sup>

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34. Ibid., 31, quoting Edmund Burke.

## CHAPTER 2.

### IRVING BABBITT AND *NEW HUMANISM*

Irving Babbitt was born in 1865. He entered Harvard in 1885, where he studied classical and modern languages, and graduated in 1893. After one year on the faculty of Williams College, he returned to Harvard where he taught until his death in 1933. Babbitt was a founder of the *New Humanism*, a movement that emphasized classical and moral values and traditions. He was a disciple of Edmund Burke, and, like Burke, was critical of Rousseau and the impact of the French Revolution. Babbitt wrote:

Among those who took up the defense of the traditional order against Rousseau, Burke is easily first, because he too perceived in his own way that cold reason has never done anything illustrious. He saw that the only conservatism that counts is an imaginative conservatism.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Irving Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), rev. ed., (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, Inc., 1979), 91. In his essay "Are the English Critical?" Babbitt echoed Burke and wrote of "the undermining by the French Revolution of the whole social order" and "the moral disintegration that has resulted in French society from the Revolution." Irving Babbitt, "Are the English Critical?" in *Character & Culture: Essays on East and West* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995). 41.

Babbitt was also a student of Buddhism, and an unrelenting critic of undisciplined romanticism, utilitarianism, sentimental humanitarianism and imperialism.

Babbitt's essays provide insight into his perceptions of mankind and society, including man's inherent nature, the necessity of inner discipline, the twin evils of sentimental humanitarianism and utilitarianism, and the "mass man" in modern society that precedes Viereck's concept of the "overadjusted man."

Babbitt, like Edmund Burke, rejected Rousseau's belief in the essential goodness of man. "Rousseau finds the source of evil not within the human self, but outside of it, in society."<sup>2</sup> Babbitt believed that this concealed man's true moral predicament, that man's nature consisted of "morally opposed inclinations."<sup>3</sup> In an essay on Matthew Arnold, Babbitt approvingly wrote:

But man, Arnold insisted, is the creature of two laws. In addition to his ordinary self of passing impulse and desires he has a permanent self that is held in its relation to his ordinary selves as a power of control. As a matter of experience, man can find happiness only insofar as he exercises this

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2. Ryn, *Introduction to Character & Culture*, xxxviii.

3. *Ibid.*, xii.

control. To deny such a conflict in man between a law of the spirit and a law of the members is simply to avert one's face from the facts and so to fall short of being completely positive and critical.<sup>4</sup>

This secular version of "original sin" is a fundamental premise of modern conservatism. Babbitt's solution for addressing the dilemma of man's dual nature is individual self-discipline.

Babbitt's characterization of the problem and solution finds support in Buddhism. The emphasis on inner discipline and on action over dogma, so fundamental to Buddhism, had a special attraction for Babbitt, who wrote of Buddha that:

... he takes as his starting point, as we have seen, the psychological fact which the philosopher of the flux is seeking to ignore -- the presence, namely, in man not merely of one but of two selves and the conflict between them ("the civil war in the cave"), the opposition as one may say between an element of change known experimentally to the individual as a vital impulse (*élan vital*), and a permanent element known to him experimentally as vital control (*frein vital*).<sup>5</sup>

The recognition of the contradictory impulses leads to the true moral problem: "One may know the right, but fail to

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4. Babbitt, "Matthew Arnold" in *Character & Culture*, 51.

5. Babbitt, "Interpreting India to the West" in *Character & Culture*, 157.

do it. What stands in the way, says Buddha, is the most subtle and deadly of all the sins -- moral indolence, the tendency to drift passably with temperament and desire."<sup>6</sup> The rejection of "metaphysics" and the thought that Babbitt found in the Buddha comported with Babbitt's rejection of *a priori* principles. "One is not to trust anything that is not immediate and experimental."<sup>7</sup>

Babbitt condemned "sentimental humanitarianism," which was "characterized by sympathy for the underdog and by idyllic-utopian dreaming about transforming human existence."<sup>8</sup>

Babbitt correspondingly criticized utilitarianism as the second great evil inconsistent with a healthy society.<sup>9</sup> In his essay *Are the English Critical?*, Babbitt described the danger that utilitarianism posed to humanism. "It is doubtful whether in a world so completely devoted to utility there will be any room for art and

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6. Ibid., 153-154.

7. Ibid., 153.

8. Ryn, Introduction to *Character & Culture*, xi.

9. Ibid., xxxviii.

literature as these terms have been understood traditionally."<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Babbitt decried the advent the "mass man" whom José Ortega y Gasset defined as follows:

... ready to profit by the immense machinery of power and material comfort built-up with the aid of physical science. This machinery he mistakenly supposes to be as much a part of the inevitable order of things as the succession of the seasons. At the same time he is lazily self-indulgent, refusing to discipline himself to the standards that are necessary for the attainment of style and of distinction in general.<sup>11</sup>

Babbitt connects this utilitarian sociology with political egalitarianism. "The cult of the common man that the equalitarian democratic encourages, is hard to distinguish from the cult of commonness."<sup>12</sup>

In *Democracy and Leadership*,<sup>13</sup> Babbitt focused on democracy, aristocracy, morality, religion, modernism, and education. Babbitt wrote:

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10. Babbitt, "Are the English Critical?" in *Character & Culture*, 43.

11. Babbitt, "The Problem of Style in a Democracy" in *Character & Culture*, 174-175.

12. *Ibid.*, 174.

13. See n. 1, *supra*.

The view of life that prevails at any particular time or among any particular people will be found, on close inspection, to be either predominantly naturalistic, or humanistic, or religious; and it will also be found that political forms tend to vary accordingly.<sup>14</sup>

Babbitt cites four foundational bodies of thought for his concept of humanism in a political context. Aristotle "remains the chief example in the past of the thinker who has treated in a way that once critical and humanistic the problems of government."<sup>15</sup> Christianity is the source of Western separation of temporal and spiritual powers.<sup>16</sup> Buddha integrated a "positive and critical view of life" with religion.<sup>17</sup> Confucius stressed the paramount importance of the virtue of a leader in political society.<sup>18</sup>

It was the naturalistic approach with which Babbitt took umbrage. Naturalistic and utilitarian are largely synonymous. Machiavelli "will probably remain the best

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14. Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership*, 49-50.

15. *Ibid.*, 53.

16. *Ibid.*, 54.

17. *Ibid.*, 55.

18. *Ibid.*, 57.

type in either East or West of the unflinching political naturalist."<sup>19</sup> The political realism of Machiavelli dictated that

The rules of ordinary morality may hold in relation between man and man, but have only a secondary place in the relations between state and state; what prevails in these latter relations is the law of cunning and the law of force.<sup>20</sup>

One consequence of this rational and materialistic, but amoral, worldview is that it "leads practically to imperialistic dreaming."<sup>21</sup> Babbitt saw both the German "üeber alles" and the American "my country right or wrong" as the progeny of Machiavelli with respect to the elimination of ethical considerations from international policy.<sup>22</sup>

The metaphysical supplants realism in the evolution of English political theory, but with the same result. Hobbes "is possibly even more lacking in ethical perception, even more naturalistic in his conception of

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19. Ibid., 59.

20. Ibid., 61.

21. Ibid., 63.

22. Ibid., 62.

human nature, the Machiavelli himself."<sup>23</sup> Locke, as well, is a "dogmatic rationalist,"<sup>24</sup> whose concepts of popular sovereignty and the rights of man are, for Babbitt, prefatory to Rousseau.<sup>25</sup> The difference between Hobbes and Locke is Hobbes' description of the state of nature as a state of war, and Locke's perception of it as a state of peace.<sup>26</sup> "To the social contract, unlimited sovereignty, and the state of nature, we need to add natural rights if we wish to complete the list of abstract metaphysical conceptions that have dominated so much of modern political thinking."<sup>27</sup>

Babbitt follows Burke in his disregard of a state of nature and adheres to the Aristotelian precept that "it is natural for man, being as he is a political animal, to live in society."<sup>28</sup> Babbitt's "principle of cohesion among

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23. Ibid., 63. Babbitt is criticizing utilitarianism. Hobbes may be considered a utilitarian in his willingness to make any bargain with a monarch in return for security and stability without implicitly conditioning that contract on monarchial moral responsibility.

24. Ibid., 64.

25. Ibid., 80.

26. Ibid., 81.

27. Ibid., 66.

28. Ibid.

men" begins with the Christian premise of submission to divine will and its emphasis on "inner life."<sup>29</sup> This principle stands in contrast to the utilitarian pursuit of the common good, whether rationalistic or instinctive, and its emphasis on service, which, when combined with sentimentalism, is "defined in its totality as humanitarianism."<sup>30</sup>

The practical problem arising from these "metaphysical conceptions" is that "doctrines of this kind

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29. Ibid., 68. Babbitt's views on Christian religion are complex. Babbitt accepts a relationship between certain elements of the religious view of life and the humanistic perspective. "Christianity supplied what was lacking in Greek philosophy. It set up doctrines that humbled reason and at the same time it created symbols that controlled man's imagination and through the imagination his will." Ibid., 200. On the other hand, a fundamental problem of modernity is an increasing tendency to substitute the kingdom of man for the kingdom of God. Ibid., 90. In an essay, Babbitt wrote that man has increasingly substituted traditional humanitarianism, in such forms as charitable giving and good works, for emphasis on individual salvation. "The individual has so subordinated himself to this vast, work that he is almost lost the sense of his individual value." Babbitt, "Lights and Shades of Spanish Character" in *Character & Culture*, 5. Babbitt perceived that Protestantism has become an effort to remediate societal ills socially rather than addressing the fundamental problem of man's nature and lack of inner restraint. Ryn, Introduction to *Character & Culture* XXIX. Thus, the distinction between humanitarianism and genuine humanism becomes lost. In contrast, "the Catholic Church may perhaps be the only institution left in the Occident that can be counted on to uphold civilized standards." Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership*, 211.

30. Ibid., 69.

are most effective in their extreme logical form because it is in this form that they capture the imagination."<sup>31</sup>

Babbitt's solution is Edmund Burke's "moral imagination." Babbitt wrote "Burke is the chief opponent of this tendency toward what one may term metaphysical politics, especially as embodied in the doctrine of the rights of man."<sup>32</sup> Burke was a proponent of personal liberty. "His individualism, however, is not, like that of Rousseau, naturalistic, but humanistic and religious. Only, in getting the standards by which the individual may hope to surpass his ordinary self, and achieve humanism or religion, he would have him lean heavily on prescription."<sup>33</sup> Babbitt referenced the two fundamental principles upon which Burke believed that society depended, the spirit of religion and the spirit of a gentleman.<sup>34</sup> Babbitt wrote:

[Burke] saw how much of the wisdom of life consists in an imaginative assumption of the experience of the past in such fashion as to bring it to bear as a

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31. Ibid., 127.

32. Ibid., 123.

33. Ibid., 125.

34. Ibid., 128.

living force upon the present. The very model that one looks up to and imitates is an imaginative creation. A man's imagination may realize in his ancestors a standard of virtue and wisdom beyond the vulgar practice of the hour; so that he may be enabled to rise with the example to whose imitation he has aspired. The forms of the past and the persons who administer them count in Burke's eyes chiefly as imaginative symbols.<sup>35</sup>

Burke was referring to the nobility and the clergy in his reference to symbols. Moral conduct is based on a collective experience from which habit is derived and acquired at an early age. "Habit must, therefore, as Aristotle says, precede reason."<sup>36</sup> Habit translates to convention, which is the catalyst by which "the experience of the past can be brought to bear on the present."<sup>37</sup> Throughout life "the imagination, thus drawn back as it were to an ethical center, supplies in turn a standard with reference to which the individual may set bounds to the lawless expansion of his natural self (which includes his intellect as well as his emotions)."<sup>38</sup> Thus, the will becomes the mediator between reason and emotion.

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35. Ibid., 127-128.

36. Ibid., 325.

37. Ibid., 327.

38. Ibid., 133.

This moral imagination of the individual, analogous to the Buddhist inner check,<sup>39</sup> has a political implication. Individual liberty is restricted by external control. The greater the capacity for individual restraint, the less external control is required. The expansion of inner restraint of the individual within the community, and ideally to the community at large, diminishes external control and assures the greatest degree of personal liberty.

Babbitt asserts that proper habit and self-discipline begin with education. "The old education was, in intention at least, a training for wisdom and character. The new education has been summed up by President Eliot in the phrase: training for service and power."<sup>40</sup> Babbitt asserts that an elective curriculum was the beginning of the end for convention that is a predicate for standards. "The older education aimed to produce leaders and, as it perceived, the basis of leadership is not commercial or

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39. "The inner check is the will educated by historically conditioned wisdom." Starliper, *Aesthetic Origins*, 107.

40. Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership*, 329.

industrial efficiency, but wisdom."<sup>41</sup> The political implications go much further. Babbitt wrote:

There is a real relation between the older educational standard that thus acted restrictively on the mere temperament of the individual and the older political standard embodied in institutions like the Constitution, Senate, and Supreme Court, that serve as a check on the ordinary or impulsive will of the people.<sup>42</sup>

Babbitt, like Burke, is an advocate of aristocracy but with a caveat. Babbitt wrote:

It is in fact the quality of a man's work that should determine his place in the hierarchy that every civilized society requires. In short, from the positive point of view, work is the only justification of aristocracy.<sup>43</sup>

His is a natural aristocracy, to be distinguished from a plutocracy. A meritocracy must also restrain materialism.

Babbitt continued:

The only remedy for economic inequality, as Aristotle says, is "to train the nobler sort of natures not to desire more;" this remedy is not in mechanical schemes for dividing up property; "for it is not the possessions but the desires of mankind which require to be equalized."<sup>44</sup>

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41. Ibid., 330.

42. Ibid., 331.

43. Ibid., 227.

44. Ibid., 229, quoting Aristotle, *Politics* 1267b.

The concept of a natural aristocracy is closely linked to moral imagination. The aristocrat is one who looks up to ideals, and therefore deserves to be looked up to. Those who cannot perform this "aristocratic work" perform work of another quality, and reap benefits accordingly.

This leads to Babbitt's balanced perception of social justice. He stated:

Every form of social justice, indeed, tends to confiscation and confiscation, when practiced on a large scale, undermines moral standards and, in so far, substitutes for real justice the law of cunning and the law of force.<sup>45</sup>

There is a caveat. "Some of the inequalities that the collectivist attacks are no doubt the result of the unethical competition promoted by *laissez-faire*."<sup>46</sup> The remedy, however, is not social or economic equality at the expense of equality before the law.

Babbitt describes a tension between quantitative democracy and qualitative democracy.<sup>47</sup> This consists of the

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45. Ibid., 232. Babbitt appears to use "confiscation" to describe redistributive economic policies, rather than appropriation in the sense of nationalization.

46. Ibid., 324.

47. Babbitt identifies anarchy as the foe of democracy, and warns that the remedy for anarchy is "humanistic or religious

juxtaposition of egalitarianism and traditional standards. The problem with democracy is the quality of leadership. "One should, therefore, in the interest of democracy itself seek to substitute the doctrine of the right man for the doctrine of the rights of man."<sup>48</sup> The deficiency in leadership is, in turn, attributable to an emphasis on utilitarian innovations and sentimentality,<sup>49</sup> and insufficient focus on moral responsibility of the individual and self-discipline.

Utilitarianism has led to materialism. "The conservative nowadays is interested in conserving property for its own sake and not, like Burke, in conserving it because it is an almost indispensable support of personal liberty, a genuinely spiritual thing."<sup>50</sup>

Sentimentality has been at the root of imperialism in international affairs. "We are willing to admit that all other nations are self-seeking, but as for ourselves, we

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discipline" rather than efficiency, innovation and pragmatism. Babbitt, "Matthew Arnold" in *Character & Culture*, 64.

48. Ibid., 272.

49. "Sentimentality" appears to be a synonym for idealism.

50. Ibid., 298.

hold that we act only on the most disinterested motives."<sup>51</sup> Domestically, sentimentality has facilitated political demagoguery. "An unvarnished materialism is in short less to be feared than sham spirituality."<sup>52</sup> The sentimentalist is unable, or unwilling, to see the struggle between good and evil in terms of the individual rather than society.

Why was Babbitt so concerned with standards and leadership? Why is moral imagination more significant for Babbitt than ideology or the science of politics? He explained:

. . . [G]overnment is power. Whether the power is to be ethical or unethical, whether in other words it is subordinated to true justice, must depend finally on the quality of will displayed by the men who administer it. For what counts practically is not justice in the abstract, but the just man. The just man is he whose various capacities (including the intellect) are acting in right relation to one another under the hegemony of the higher will.<sup>53</sup>

The state that is administered by just man will be a just state.

[I]t will be of service to other states, not by meddling in their affairs on either commercial or

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51. Ibid., 295.

52. Ibid., 308.

53. Ibid., 334.

"idealistic" grounds, but by setting them a good example. A state of this kind may hope to find a basis of understanding with any other state that is also ethically control.<sup>54</sup>

The *New Humanism* is a precursor to the *New Conservatism*, particularly in its emphasis on the conjunction of tradition and imagination. Babbitt eschewed "that great fetish of modern scholarship, the historical method, which tends to deny the enduring scale of values, and to see everything relatively, to account for everything in terms of time and place."<sup>55</sup> Babbitt's reliance on classicism and tradition, however, is not without an important caveat. "But though we need to revive our sense of tradition, we cannot afford to be mere traditionalists, lest we suffer from [a] lack of ideas."<sup>56</sup> Imagination is the springboard of ideas. Why *moral* imagination? Babbitt believed "that every type of imagination involves an attitude toward life in general and is fraught with implications for how we should live."<sup>57</sup>

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54. Ibid., 335.

55. Babbitt, "Matthew Arnold" in *Character & Culture*, 53.

56. Babbitt, "Are the English Critical?" in *Character & Culture*, 44.

57. Ryn, Introduction to *Character & Culture*, xl.

Babbitt's writings reflect his "general philosophy of life with its simultaneous emphasis on self-restraint and creativity and its stress on the need for flexibly balancing different points of view."<sup>58</sup> That philosophy is the bridge from Burke to Babbitt, and from Babbitt to Viereck. Discussing the influence of Babbitt on Viereck, Claes Ryn writes:

Babbitt's treatment of the imagination and of man's central moral predicament also deeply affected Peter Viereck's writings about literature, culture, and politics. Viereck's own literary credo can be read as a personal reformulation and extension of Babbitt's aesthetical position. Viereck's poetry reflects his deeply felt belief that the highest form of art is the moral imagination.<sup>59</sup>

The concepts of morally opposed inclinations, the necessity of inner discipline, the perniciousness of utilitarianism, the importance of qualitative democracy, and tension between self-restraint and creativity all become cornerstones of Peter Viereck's political thought.

Viereck writes that Irving Babbitt, along with Paul Elmer More, was a co-founder of the modern humanist

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58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., xxvi.

movement. "Their use of the ambiguous word 'humanism' meant a cultural and ethical conserving of values, based on literary classicism."<sup>60</sup> Babbitt advocated non-elective, aristocratic institutions, and the constitutional democracy of Burke and George Washington, rather than the direct democracy of Rousseau and Thomas Jefferson. He rejected both "Catholic clericalism and its supernatural dogma" and "liberals and their naturalistic relativism."<sup>61</sup> Babbitt "reinforced his favorite doctrine, the ethical 'inner check,' by translating Buddhist classics on that theme."<sup>62</sup>

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60. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 104.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*

PART II  
THE NEW CONSERVATISM

## CHAPTER 3.

### HISTORICAL CONSERVATISM

In the beginning there was "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité." Conservatism began as a reaction to French Revolution.<sup>1</sup> "[T]he major philosophies of conservatism were devised only *after* the French Revolution and its egalitarian rationalism threatened aristocratic traditionalism all over the globe."<sup>2</sup>

"Isms" are frequently, perhaps inherently, ambiguous.<sup>3</sup> So it is with conservatism. Liberty is the central value of evolutionary, or "Burkean," conservatism, while authority is the focus of reactionary, or "Ottantottist," conservatism. Evolutionary conservatism is a fusion of preservation and, recognizing the inevitability for change, progressive capacity, but without liberalism's optimism and faith in progress.<sup>4</sup> Reactionary conservatives seek to restore a past, rather than constrain the future.

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1. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 114.

2. *Ibid.*, 21.

3. Viereck will assert that conservatism is not an "ism" at all in that it is not an ideology. This is somewhat a matter of context.

4. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 25.

The premise common to both varieties of conservatism is a belief in the human tendency to anarchy, evil and mutual destruction. This tendency is characterized by the metaphor of "original sin." Only society's traditional restrictions on the ego make humans good. The social consequence of original sin is an incapability inherent in human nature to "blueprint" progress for itself.<sup>5</sup>

Liberalism is "an optimistic secular religion of progress," generous and sincere, but inattentive to the lessons of history.<sup>6</sup> Liberalism pursues the peaceful alteration of traditional framework, distinguishing it from both its own radical strain by adherence to peaceful means and from reactionary conservatism. Liberalism, like conservatism, is also multi-faceted, extending from the romanticism of Rousseau to the atomistic egalitarianism of Thomas Paine to the agrarian individualism of Thomas Jefferson. Liberalism is founded on the premises of the natural goodness of man and

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5. Ibid., 40.

6. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 65.

instinctive rightness of the masses. The foundation of conservatism is tradition.

The line of separation between moderate liberalism and evolutionary conservatism is frequently fine, and concerns human nature, the value of tradition and the means and pace of change.<sup>7</sup> The distinguishing factor is not property rights; evolutionary conservatives advocate for the defense of property only when a materialistic base is linked to a moral base. The distinction is not patriotism; totalitarianism is the common foe of both liberalism and conservatism. However, there is a fundamental difference. "Their contrast may be partly and briefly defined as the tragic cyclical view of man, based on a political secularization of original sin, vs. the optimistic faith in the goodness of man and the inevitability of linear progress."<sup>8</sup>

The conservative state of mind has manifested itself through traditional religious institutions, including Catholicism, the Church of England, and Protestantism; and

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7. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 15.

8. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 146.

in cultural expressions, such as art and literature. Newman, Kierkegaard and Niebuhr represent religious conservatism, while Coleridge, Melville, Nietzsche<sup>9</sup> and Dostoyevsky are literary examples. Melville warned against "'the impieties of progress.'"<sup>10</sup> The common theme is a repudiation of industrialism. "Because conservatism stresses concrete emotional loyalties more than abstract theories, it overlaps more frequently with poetry (that crystallization of the emotional and concrete) than do other political isms."<sup>11</sup> This concept of cultural conservatism involves a paradox. Viereck wrote:

What in politics is the self-destructive vice of the extreme reactionary - his remoteness from the present - sometimes becomes his virtue in art. The remoteness may give him the perspective, the detachment that facilitates imaginative flights.... What counts most is not their sometimes embarrassing politics but their insights into the soul and into the wounds it suffers from a too-shallow kind of liberal material progress. Visionaries beyond politics, the cultural conservatives are forever weighing the moral debits against the material credits of a mechanical world. Cultural conservatism

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9. Nietzsche's "superman" is one who can maintain "a spiritual self-discipline . . . against the 'herd'," Ibid., 82, and is the precursor of Viereck's "Unadjusted Man," not of the twentieth-century Nazi. Viereck, *Unadjusted Man*, 53-63.

10. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 102.

11. Ibid., 33.

is a spiritual arithmetic: it calculates the price paid for progress.<sup>12</sup>

The opposition between materialistic and cultural conservatives has produced an ambiguity in the American perception of conservatism. It is viewed as both "(1) the efficient modernism, cash-nexus selfishness, and atomistic society of the plutocrats; [and] (2) the inefficient medievalism, anti-plutocratic idealism, and organic society of [cultural conservatives]."<sup>13</sup> There is, nonetheless, a commonality: preference for established elitist authority and distrust of the abstract social plans of both utopians and statist.

Conservatism is empirical, not rationalist. "Conservative theory is anti-theoretical."<sup>14</sup> The conservative characterizes abstractions as *a priori*, "ideas deduced entirely from 'prior' ideas, as opposed to ideas rooted in historical experience."<sup>15</sup>

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12. Ibid., 16-17.

13. Ibid., 41.

14. Ibid., 16.

15. Ibid., 18.

Conservatism is organic, not atomistic. This concept is consistent with the tension between community and individualism described by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835 and ever present in American society. Viereck wrote:

A society is allegedly made organic by religion, idealism, shared historical experiences like nationality, monarchy or constitution, and the emotions of reverence, cooperation, loyalty. A society is allegedly made atomistic by materialism, class war, excessive *laissez-faire* economics, greedy profiteering, over analytical intellectuality, subversion of shared institutions, insistence on rights above duties, and the emotions of skepticism, cynicism, plebian envy.<sup>16</sup>

Conservatives, however, "do not carry [organic unity] to the extreme where the individual becomes nothing, society everything. At that extreme we no longer have conservatism but totalitarian statism."<sup>17</sup>

Conservatism is not plutocratic.

Conservatism is aristocratic, but consistent with indirect, although not direct, democracy. Civil liberties

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16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 18-19. The pathological conservatism of German Romanticism is an exception. In 1802 Johann Goethe wrote "And only law can give us liberty." Ibid., 77-78. German Romanticism originated in the early nineteenth century and culminated in the Third Reich. Its rejection of liberal rationalism was so radical that it produced cultural anarchy and, subsequently and reactively, extreme authoritarianism. The Romantic impulse ironically can be the foe of individual freedom.

devolved from the resistance to monarchical tyranny by medieval feudal aristocrats. The appropriation of liberty by the masses has come with a price. "Democracy changed liberty from an individual privilege to a general right, thereby gaining in quantity of freedom but losing a quality of freedom -- that is, losing in the creative intensity of earlier aristocracies ...."<sup>18</sup> Expansion of the franchise gravitates against election of candidates of superior intellectual standards. Therefore, "democratic egalitarianism is the true foe of liberty."<sup>19</sup>

In its synthesis with indirect democracy, aristocracy transitioned to a defense of the ideals of honor, tradition and self-discipline, rather than of privilege or class itself. The concept evolved from a hereditary to a "natural" aristocracy. In time, the political liability inherent in overt *noblesse oblige* transformed the aristocratic spirit into "an unconscious or unwritten

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18. Ibid., 26.

19. Ibid.; Viereck, *Unadjusted Man* 27-34.

differentiation" between liberals and conservatives.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, conservatism is a temperament.

The rejection of the extremes of totalitarianism, plutocracy and direct democracy distinguish conservatives from radicals at each end of the spectrum.

### **Historical American Conservatism**

The Federalists were essentially evolutionary conservatives.<sup>21</sup> John Adams "denounced 'the spirit of commerce and avarice.'"<sup>22</sup> Culturally, "... conservatives tended toward formal and institutionalized forms of Protestantism"<sup>23</sup> while liberals such as Thomas Jefferson

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20. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 22.

21. This statement requires qualification. The Federalists were communitarian and certainly not influenced by Rousseau. On the other hand, the Federalist constitution was, in Babbitt's terminology, naturalistic (that is, utilitarian) and not humanistic. The futile attempt at resolving the issue of slavery is a perfect example. This Constitution was endorsed from afar by the idealistic Jefferson, and defended, with later misgivings, by his proxy, James Madison. Jefferson is perceived as Lockean in his authorship of the anti-Hobbesian Declaration of Independence and later opposition to the Federalist policies. However, Locke was a mercantilist, not truly a classic liberal in the fashion of Thomas Paine. In this sense, Locke may be considered as an inspiration for Hamilton as well as for Jefferson. That is a political paradox. Viereck extols the conservatism of John Adams. However, Adams was not a mainstream Federalist. It is difficult to characterize eighteenth-century American conservatism.

22. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 92.

23. *Ibid.*, 93.

and the more radical Thomas Paine were deists. Politically, the Federalist concept of a centralized government prevailed over the Anti-Federalists' atomistic vision of local autonomy. The demise of the Federalists in 1815 and the ensuing "Era of Good Feeling" were followed, beginning in 1828, by the Jacksonian era of mass democracy and the *a priori* abstraction of the "common man" rooted in expansion into the West.<sup>24</sup> John C. Calhoun, Jackson's antagonist, responded with philosophical political arguments in support of an aristocratic Southern culture that was being overwhelmed by Northern innovation and industry.<sup>25</sup> Viereck wrote:

That lost cause, justified philosophically by "concurrent majority" and "state's rights" was the second great conservative movement in our history. The first had been the Federalists. Both were rooted in a regional aristocracy: the first, New England and centralizing; the second, Southern and decentralizing.

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24. Ibid., 97.

25. Viereck asserts that Calhoun was a restorationist, although Calhoun's defense of tradition was more Burkean than the Federalist centralized government. Ibid., 97. This is a questionable proposition. Calhoun endeavored to maintain a *status quo* that was inextricably linked to slavery, rather than to restore a past. It is inconceivable that Burke, who was an opponent of slavery, would have considered this a "tradition" that should be conserved. Calhoun's philosophy became the foundation, albeit absent Calhoun's intellectual patina, of uncompromising Southern resistance to change that would endure for more than another century. This is hardly Burkean.

Both preferred liberty to equality, Burke to Paine. Then came the Civil War between them, followed by a new situation submerging both: modern industrialism.<sup>26</sup>

Conservatism in the era after the Civil War was framed by *laissez faire* capitalism ("Manchester Liberalism") and Social Darwinism.<sup>27</sup> It produced the Gilded Age dominated by the "Robber Barons." In terms of governance, the last third of the nineteenth century was one in which there was no discernible difference between the Republican and Democratic parties, neither of which could boast of any accomplishment or social progress. There is another more complex story. Nancy Cohen proposes that the intellectual advocacy of reform began immediately after Civil War, encompassing the Liberal Republican movement of 1872-73, and continued through the Progressive era when the political finally reflected the intellectual.<sup>28</sup> Even so, like the American Revolution, progressive reform was essentially a conservative

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26. Ibid., 98.

27. Ibid., 99.

28. Nancy Cohen, *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

movement. This could be considered the Americanization of Tory Democracy.

Conservatism was overwhelmed by the New Deal, although, like the Progressive movement, the New Deal was, in its early phases, consistent with evolutionary conservatism in many respects. The New Deal is a study in both the similarities and the distinctions between evolutionary conservatism and pragmatism. The New Deal also gave a new meaning to "liberalism."<sup>29</sup>

Since the Civil War the humanistic dissonance between materialistic and cultural conservatism had been paralleled by two differing political perceptions regarding the identity of "true" conservatives. Viereck described the dichotomy as follows:

- (1) the business community and the Republican Party;
- (2) those who distrust the business community as atomistic and rootless and who prefer (in the style

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29. The word "liberal" was largely absent from the American political lexicon until 1932. Franklin D. Roosevelt "had to capture a favorable symbol that would help to ward off expected attacks labeling his programs as 'communistic' or 'socialistic.'" Ronald D. Rotunda, *The Politics of Language: Liberalism as Word and Symbol* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1986), 54. The term was psychologically advantageous since nobody would identify with its antonym, "illiberal." It was politically advantageous since it obfuscated the labels "Democrat" and "Republican," facilitating popular support of Roosevelt among voters who did not identify themselves as Democrats.

of Disraeli's "Tory Democracy") the Democratic Party's alliance of southern agrarian aristocrats and social-minded northern trade unions.<sup>30</sup>

The Democratic alliance was augmented by the Northern social and intellectual aristocracy recruited by the New Deal. Viereck, an expert in European history, presents two historical hypotheses:

The modern Republican businessman may be regarded as the descendant, no longer revolutionary but now respectable, of the French Revolution. The French Revolution of 1789 had brought to power the anti-aristocratic, commercial middle class. The Revolution had proclaimed (among other things) an atomistic society of *laissez-faire* liberalism and economic free enterprise against the state-controls of an organic, monarchical society. According to this debatable hypothesis, the *laissez-faire* capitalists represent the French Revolution, while the New Deal has made conservatism possible again, even though doing so unintentionally. An equally well-documented hypothesis says just the opposite: the radical segments of the New Deal, its utopian abstractions and faith in the masses, were descended from the revolutionary Jacobins, while the solid, cautious, reliable businessmen represent the Burkean counter-revolution.<sup>31</sup>

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30. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 101. It is difficult to fix the time frame to which Viereck refers. This could be an apt description of the transformation of the Democratic party in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Jeffersonian Democrats determined that big business was a greater threat to liberty and equality than was big government, and that government was the only available instrument with the power to curb the abuses and corruption of the "robber barons" and *laissez faire* capitalism.

31. *Ibid.*, 101-102.

It is difficult to characterize a classic liberal as a descendent of the French Revolution. Although the alternative hypothesis is somewhat polemical, it is a more likely basis for a regeneration of some brand of conservatism as a reaction to some aspects and agents of the New Deal.

## CHAPTER 4.

### PETER VIERECK AND *NEW CONSERVATISM*

Peter Viereck was born in New York City in 1916. He was the older of two sons of George Sylvester Viereck. His grandfather, Louis Viereck, was reputed to be an illegitimate son of the German Kaiser Wilhelm I. Brought up in a royal life-style, Louis became a social democrat, was imprisoned for his political behavior, and emigrated to the US in 1896.

George Sylvester Viereck, a German-born newspaperman and poet, had remained loyal to his homeland through two world wars. He was alleged to be a German sabotage agent in the First World War. He had interviewed Adolf Hitler and became known as a Nazi propagandist prior to World War II. In early 1942, he was convicted of withholding material facts from the State Department when he registered as a foreign agent, and served four years in a federal prison. Peter found his father's activities repugnant and remained estranged from his father for many years.

Peter Viereck attended Phillips Exeter, then graduated summa cum laude from Harvard, and went on to Oxford. He earned a bachelor's degree in nineteenth-century history and literature from Harvard in 1937. He continued on there for a master's degree in European history in 1939 and a Ph.D. in the same field in 1942.

In World War II, he was an Army intelligence analyst, studying Nazi propaganda. He served as an enlisted man, since his father's German ties precluded Peter from becoming an officer. He spent the war writing intelligence reports in Africa and Italy for the Army's Psychological Warfare Branch. Serving with distinction in the United States Army, he won two battle stars. He was also writing poems, several of which were published in the *New Yorker*. His younger brother, George Sylvester Jr., was killed in action in Italy.

In 1945 Viereck married a Russian resistance fighter, Anya de Markov. They divorced in 1970.

After a year teaching at Smith College, he joined the faculty at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. He taught history, and in particular Russian history, for

almost forty years. He remained at Mount Holyoke as a professor emeritus.

He received the Pulitzer Prize in 1949 for his first collection of poems, *Terror and Decorum*.<sup>1</sup> He published five books on political history and conservatism between 1949 and 1956. In the 1960s, Viereck turned away from politics and focused on teaching history and writing poetry. He is believed to have been the only American to win a Guggenheim fellowship in both history and poetry.<sup>2</sup>

### **Moral Imagination**

The New Conservatism is an application to the political of Viereck's fundamental view of life: all human action must reflect values. "The imagination, Viereck believed, is at the very root of our view of life."<sup>3</sup> Viereck followed Babbitt in embracing Burke's

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1. Peter Viereck, *Terror and Decorum* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948).

2. New York Times, May 19, 2006; Los Angeles Time, May 20, 2006; The Guardian, May 29, 2006.

3. Starliper, *Aesthetic Origins*, ix. Viereck is intractable in his rejection of reason as a proper determinant of human will. A counter-argument is that imagination is the mediator between reason and will. Starliper, *Aesthetic Origins*, 93, 96-98, 107, 126. See Claes G. Ryn, *Will, Imagination & Reason: Babbitt, Croce and the Problem of Reality* (Chicago: Regnery Books, 1986) rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1997).

moral imagination, the concept that moral conduct is based on a collective experience. Over hundreds, even thousands, of years a community builds upon the experience of its ancestors to develop a consensus regarding values. This consensus can be described as habit or "prejudice," in Burke's words, or as historical tradition, in Viereck's words. This is the universal. Every human has experience specific to that person. This is the individuality. The source of ethical behavior is the synthesis of the universal and the individual. The consensus values become the context that governs a person's perception of a circumstance or event, and of the available alternative responses. The universal is the lens through which the individuality is perceived. Ideally, the universal, in combination with self-discipline, is an internal restraint which diminishes the need for external restraints. This process is imagination - it enables and requires a person to reach a decision, whether consciously or intuitively, rather than unconsciously conform. When emulation is a component of the process, Viereck demands archetypes, rather than stereotypes.

Babbitt and Burke referred to as a moral imagination.<sup>5</sup>

The medium through which values define culture is art, in all its forms, but particularly literature. "Good" art is never didactic and always reflects ethical values. Viereck, like Babbitt, believed, Starliper writes:

Art does have its own aesthetic imperative and value, but to be humane and great it must give profound expression to what ultimately matters most to human beings, namely the moral and spiritual terms of existence. It must be more than aesthetically appealing, must have moral depth and health. Works of art that disdain distinctions of good and evil begin to undermine beauty itself.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the ethical values expressed in art define culture, which defines the political. For Viereck, then, the artistic is the source of the political. Since art can only thrive in an atmosphere of free thought and individual creativity, these became Viereck's core values and the prerequisite for a healthy community.

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5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., xi.

The implications are subtle. There can be no moral absolutes since the collective experience is a continuously evolving process. However, the consensus nature of the derived values precludes relativism.

Nor is imagination ethically monolithic. The values that a community adopts define its culture, which may be benign or pathological. That culture, in turn, determines the political choices a community makes. "For Viereck, a certain quality of imagination must be present within society if the social order is to be tolerably preserved."<sup>4</sup> The imprecision of Viereck's language is problematic. Starliper writes:

Throughout his writings, Viereck mentioned various different kinds of imagination -- the moral imagination (UM 293), the creative imagination (UM 258), the private imagination (UM 330), the inner imagination (CR 138), the lyrical imagination (UM 304), the free imagination (SW 37), the artistic imagination (UM 299), the unadjusted imagination (UM 272) -- but never asserted which of these imaginations is the means by which civilization is simultaneously aesthetically satiated and ethically sustained. Notwithstanding the various labels, Viereck used each of these terms to reference a certain quality of imagination that is the prerequisite for the happiness of both individuals and society as a whole: the type of imagination that

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4. Ibid., 123.

## The New Conservatism

So, what was the nature of that reaction to the New Deal? Its first expression was the New Conservatism articulated in Peter Viereck's *Conservatism Revisited*.

In less than metaphysical terms, "there is the distinction between what is done and how it is done."<sup>7</sup> Liberals<sup>8</sup> and conservatives differ with respect to the following:

... tempo of social change; need for tradition; confidence in modern technics; faith in the masses and in the natural goodness of man; feasibility of changing human nature; importance of utilitarian motives (economics vs. "ideas" in history); risk of extending full democratic privileges even to those engaged in forcibly destroying democracy; conflict between liberty and a leveling equality; absoluteness or relativity of existing restraints and standards.<sup>9</sup>

The antithesis of conservatism is not liberalism, but materialism, conformity and nationalism.

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7. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 142.

8. Viereck acknowledges the ambiguity of the "liberal" label. Nevertheless, "... [L]iberal has certain enduring connotations that apply to both the Gladstonian liberal and the modern anti-capitalist liberal." *Ibid.*, 65. Viereck apparently is referring to Old Guard Republicans, including Senator Robert A. Taft, whom Viereck disparaged frequently.

9. *Ibid.*

Genuine conservatism is understood when perceived as a temperament or state of mind, rather than as political ideology or economic theory. The temperament is an "inarticulate" distrust of human nature and innovation and trust in continuity and traditional restraints.<sup>10</sup>

Conservatism is not an ideology, but "a way of living."<sup>11</sup> Although best understood as a state of mind rather than as a political ideology, conservatism finds its expression in the political. It "may be the credo best adapted to sustain a free and reasonable society. A credo not of some monolithic, systematized ideology but of a subtly linked pluralism of rediscovered values."<sup>12</sup>

Viereck provides an inventory of conservative principles that "together create freedom" based on ethics and law. Viereck includes:

... proportion and measure; self-expression through self-restraint; preservation through reform; humanism and classical balance; a fruitful nostalgia for the permanent beneath the flux; and a fruitful obsession for unbroken historical continuity.<sup>13</sup>

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10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 153.

12. Ibid., 63.

13. Ibid., 70.

Conservatism, for Viereck, is not simply a collection of positions, but principles that can be identified in positions. "The core and fire-center of conservatism, its emotional élan, is a humanistic reverence for the dignity of the human soul."<sup>14</sup> The goal of government should be "to make all its citizens aristocrats,"<sup>15</sup> not in class, but in spirit.<sup>16</sup> Conservatism's greatest value is the "necessity and sanctity of law," and equal application of the law.<sup>17</sup>

Political difference, for Viereck, is a matter of degree, not good and evil. Viereck follows the lead of the liberal reformers.<sup>18</sup> "Since the industrial revolution, conservatism is neither justifiable nor effective unless it has roots in the factories and trade unions."<sup>19</sup> He rejects *laissez faire* or an inference of "socialism" as an

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14. Ibid., 71.

15. Ibid., 72.

16. Ibid., 74.

17. Ibid., 71-72.

18. See Cohen, *Reconstruction of American Liberalism*, supra, 59.

19. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 73. "... [T]he national socialism of Hitler and the bolshevism of Stalin ... both begin by abolishing the right to strike and end by turning their workers into slave labor." Ibid., 120.

adequate basis for rejection of welfare laws, but also rejects a "welfare superstate."<sup>20</sup> Again, it is a matter of degree. Viereck writes:

To keep on the liberty side rather than the total-security side of this line, the conservative should insist that social law be expanded not demagogically but where needed; always with twoparty [sic] participation; and never regimenting more of society than the minimum essential for order and justice.<sup>21</sup>

He is an advocate of institutional restraints on majoritarianism, but a critic of the thwarting of the "sustained will" of a majority "lest a dictatorship of Lords or a majority of the Supreme Court menace liberty as much as mob dictatorship."<sup>22</sup> A principal restraint is the guarantee of civil liberties by the Bill of Rights. Viereck makes a plea for collaboration in the protection of civil liberties.<sup>23</sup> "[T]he American Constitution performs a conservative and aristocratic function" in protecting

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20. Ibid., 75.

21. Ibid., 76.

22. Ibid., 77.

23. Ibid.

the Bill of Rights by appropriate limitation on the process of amendment.<sup>24</sup>

Viereck contrasts the humanism of (his) conservatism with the economic functionalism of liberals and progressives.<sup>25</sup> Organization of society for economic production requires values, some values. "These values, according to their degree of justice and rationality determine the economics and material prosperity of their society. Not vice versa."<sup>26</sup>

Political diversity is an essential condition, as is tolerance of art, religion and personality. "With his vigorous criticism of abuses and his quick articulate conscience, the liberal is indispensable. Thoughtful conservatives should welcome his opposition, for it saves society from stodginess."<sup>27</sup>

Christianity, abused by both materialists revolting against ethics and by romanticists revolting against reason, improved Athenian democracy by the infusion of a

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24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 78.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 80.

respect for the individual soul that must precede both political democracy and economic justice. Viereck asserts that Christianity is essential, and describes its function as follows:

... conserving and fusing the four ancestries of western man: the stern moral commandments and social justice of Judaism; the love for beauty and for untrammelled intellectual speculation of the free Hellenic mind; the Roman Empire's universalism and its exaltation of law; and the Aristotelianism, Thomism, and antinominalism of the Middle Ages.<sup>28</sup>

Christianity is a bulwark against "barbarism." Viereck numbers the Germanic and Tartar invaders of Rome and Kiev, as well as Nazis and Marxists, among barbarians. The relationship between Christianity and conservatism is a fundamental one. "Conservatism, which is for politics what classicism is for literature, is the political secularization of original sin."<sup>29</sup> It is the antithesis of the romantic devotion to the "natural goodness of man," collectivism, and "faith in the masses."<sup>30</sup>

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28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 81.

Viereck proffers Metternich, who anticipated the "mass-man," as a model humanistic conservative.<sup>31</sup> Viereck wrote:

Earlier than Karl Marx, Metternich was among the first to point out a fact on increasing interest today: namely, that the liberty for which the capitalist fought was sometimes a means to substitute an economic oligarchy for the existing political aristocracy.<sup>32</sup>

Metternich recognized that true freedom did not extend to an individual's limitless freedom "to destroy the freedom of his poorer neighbor."<sup>33</sup> He was a proponent of gradual reform and a self-proclaimed socialist. "What he meant by his 'socialism' was simply that the rule of law, moral and economic in scope, must restrain the new middle-class seizers of power and must subordinate their capitalism to the common welfare."<sup>34</sup>

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31. Ibid., 82-103.

32. Ibid., 114.

33. Ibid., 115.

34. Ibid. In the nineteenth century socialism had a far different meaning than the twentieth-century economic concept of statist welfare; socialism was an expression of the organic, rather than atomistic, concept of a society. Socialism represented social unity, structural (even monarchical) "cement," and the role of conscience over anti-social individualism and commercialism. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 74. Metternich's "conservative socialism" would evolve into Benjamin Disraeli's "Tory Democracy," and subsequently into Winston Churchill's alliance between nobles and

Metternich was an advocate of freedom of thought who imposed censorship, "not to curtail *free* thought but to curtail enslavement of *free thought* by irrational *emotions*."<sup>35</sup> Viereck wrote:

The following question must be debated with an open mind rather than oversimplified or answered dogmatically: will any given measure our democracy passes against conspiracy endanger civil liberties less or more than do the conspirators? Neither Metternich's age nor ours has solved this troublesome dilemma.<sup>36</sup>

The question posed by Viereck is critically relevant in the age of terrorism, and remains unanswered.

Metternich was an internationalist, albeit ultimately unsuccessful. Viereck, again with continuing relevancy, states:

Like Metternich we have made not only strategic mistakes. We, too, have made moral mistakes - whenever we have supported reactionary forces abroad instead of a coalition of free conservative and liberal forces.... Our cause, like his, is not white but gray.<sup>37</sup>

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commoners in opposition to plutocrats. Disraeli, like Burke before him and Viereck after him, believed that tradition was an essential component of social progress. *Ibid.*, 10-46.

35. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 118.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, 128.

Viereck was the original compassionate conservative, and somewhat of a relativist.

### **Conservative Heroism: Dissent From Conformity**

In 1956 Viereck wrote that America was in an age of conformity "qualitatively beyond the older, pre-industrial conformity noted by Tocqueville,"<sup>38</sup> and that "The traumatic uprooting of archetypes was the most important consequence of the worldwide industrial revolution."<sup>39</sup> The industrial revolution not only mechanized production, but also replaced the individual with the mass which relies upon "external stereotypes mass-produced by the entertainment industry or by statist social engineers."<sup>40</sup> The organic unity of individuals was replaced by a synthetic mechanical unity of the masses, including both the middle-class and working-class. The failure to account for the middle-class contributes to an upper class delusion that the anti-working-class politics and economics of classic liberals are justified by preservation of individualism.

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38. Viereck, *Unadjusted Man*, 4.

39. *Ibid.*, 18.

40. *Ibid.*, 21.

Ironically, both capitalist materialism and Marxism elevate mechanized quantity over personal quality, while the trade unions vilified by captains of industry foster the conservative organic spirit of community cooperation. Viereck points to the Jacksonian mass man as the source of the intolerant conformism that characterizes the overadjusted man.<sup>41</sup>

The true conservative is heroic, an "Unadjusted Man"<sup>42</sup> who resists depersonalization in order to preserve "inner psychological liberty" that is indispensable to all external liberty.<sup>43</sup> Just as "[c]onservatism should never be confused with conformism,"<sup>44</sup> the true conservative is characterized by "adjustment to the ages, non-adjustment to the age."<sup>45</sup> This individual adheres to tradition over convention. "The meaningful moral choice" is not

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41. Ibid., 23-25.

42. Viereck contrasts the "Unadjusted Man" with the "Overadjusted Man" characterized by an "abnormal desire for normalcy" and distinguishes him from the psychiatric "maladjusted," the crotchety "never-adjusted" and the bohemian "misunderstood genius." Ibid., 4-6.

43. Ibid., 3.

44. Ibid., 12.

45. Ibid., 6.

nonconformity as such, but rather to conform with either stereotypical or archetypal values.<sup>46</sup> Christianity, "by revering the infinite preciousness of each individual soul" resists overadjustment.<sup>47</sup> Viereck holds out Thomas More as the archetype of the Unadjusted Man. "More's revolt is essentially conservative because he does remain voluntarily 'the king's good servant' until driven to some ultimate moral extreme."<sup>48</sup>

The "dissent from conformity" by liberal intellectuals is flawed by a lack of discrimination. "The relevant question is: which standards merit dissent, which ones merit assent?"<sup>49</sup> The overadjusted spirit is "inimical to the creative imagination"<sup>50</sup> and permits adoption, and adulteration, of "[e]very new philosophical, literary or religious insight (emphatically including the new conservatism)."<sup>51</sup> The new conservatism is a challenge to

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46. Ibid., 17.

47. Ibid., 5.

48. Ibid., 6.

49. Ibid., 12.

50. Ibid., 14.

51. Ibid., 16.

the complacency founded on American optimism about man and material progress. Old Guard Republican criticism of new conservatism is a vehicle for "thought-controlling nationalism."<sup>52</sup>

Viereck applies the concepts of conservative individualism and creative imagination to egalitarianism. Equality is an ambiguous concept. Viereck distinguishes between objective legal and subjective psychological equality. The latter can never be fully achieved, but its pursuit is justified in order to alleviate social tension until the benefit is "outweighed by the loss in diversity, creativity, and individuality."<sup>53</sup> There is a point of diminishing returns inherent in egalitarianism. An averaging of the mass cannot replace below-average without also eliminating the above-average. The conservative believes that the "greatest good for the greatest number" requires an above-average minority. The proper balance in

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52. Ibid., 17.

53. Ibid., 43.

education lies in democratic elementary education and elitist university education.<sup>54</sup>

Viereck asserts that liberty and equality are both a virtues, albeit preferring liberty. However he notes that American history indicates that advocates of each can promote thought control. Both populists and "agitator-type of Republicans," such as Senator Joseph McCarthy, are prone to demagoguery.<sup>55</sup> As an alternative Viereck proposes the synthesis represented by Reinhold Niebuhr, melding religious conservatism with New Deal social reform. This middle path combines the reform motive with religious and economic non-statist social democracy, and a distrust of all power equally.

Viereck held out Adlai Stevenson as an example of this synthesis in the political realm. However, there was a different storm gathering.

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54. "What 'progressive education' forgot was this: its word 'citizenship' would often be defined in practice not by some lofty John Dewey but by some thought controlling politician interested in garnering not wisdom but votes." Ibid., 20.

55. Ibid., 45-47.

PART III  
THE NEW RIGHT

## CHAPTER 5.

### WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY, JR. AND THE NEW RIGHT

Peter Viereck and William F. Buckley, Jr., were the protagonists in the evolution of American conservatism after the Second World War. Viereck's publication of *Conservatism Revisited* in 1949 was followed by Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* in 1951, in which Buckley "condemned Yale for failing to effectively indoctrinate its students into ideals: Christianity and a brand of pure laissez-faire economics that Buckley calls 'individualism.'"<sup>1</sup> In contrast to Viereck's concept of a moderate, humanistic and progressive conservatism, Buckley espoused a strident, ideological and reactionary brand.

Viereck authored a highly critical review of *God and Man at Yale*. Viereck wrote:

In *The New York Times Book Review*, Viereck praised Buckley for his insistence that "man has a moral nature," but criticized him for identifying morality with the anti-welfare-state economics of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and "Old Guard Republicanism." Viereck asked, "Is there no selfish materialism at all in the NAM?"<sup>2</sup>

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1. Bogus, *Buckley*, 80.

2. John B. Judis, *William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives* (1988; repr. New York: Simon & Schuster, First

The conservative publisher Henry Regnery, whose company has published *God and Man at Yale*, wrote Viereck, stating:

I have just read your review of Buckley's book. I think you have done a good job. You go a little further than I would, but your review is the kind that really serves a purpose. I think it will be good for Buckley, for one thing,...

Regnery described most other reviews as "worse than useless," citing one review that accused Buckley of "pure, unmitigated fascism."<sup>3</sup>

Viereck responded to Regnery, at length, particularly condemning the accusation of fascism.<sup>4</sup>

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Touchstone Edition, 1990), 96, quoting Viereck, "Conservatism Under the Elms." Viereck also wrote an essay about *God and Man at Yale* entitled "Restraining Reckless Middle-Age." One iteration ran twenty-three double-spaced pages. Peter Viereck, *Papers*, Columbia University Library, New York. In that draft Viereck wrote, on page 6, "For Buckley, conservatism is particularly concerned with economics; for me, with social ethics." The essay mounted a defense of academic freedom. However, while criticizing Buckley's advocacy of ideological purity among faculty members, Viereck wrote, at page 19, "I favor withholding all university and government posts (although not free speech) from all Communists." An edited version very similar to "Conservatism Under the Elms" was included in *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*. Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, 60-63.

3. Henry Regnery to Peter Viereck, November 1, 1951, Viereck Papers.

4. In an interesting passage Viereck wrote, "As I point out to people, fascism means statism. Buckley is the opposite of statism. He is for an extreme laissez-faire, which, while desirable as a counter-balance against the dangerous statist tendencies of today, is absurdly impossible at a time when we cannot resist the main enemy, the red army, without the taxes and controls needed for our own all-out

I think I understand Buckley's intentions.... I find myself this past week in the position of defending the book against the wrong slanderous kind of attack .... As you can see from my review, I never dreamed that I would be maneuvered into the position of becoming in that respect its lone campus defender.

After restating a defense of academic freedom, Viereck cautioned that confusion and ambiguities in the book could "play into dangerous hands in a way not intended by the author." Nevertheless, Viereck wrote:

[Buckley] impresses me, in the dignity with which he met critics in Northampton, as a thoroughly decent person of the highest intellect. From such a mind, sooner or later, good will come, making his next book a better book. One of the sentences cut from my review for lack of space at the printer's, said "What he will retain for his next and better book, is his valuable general appeal for 'resisting statism' and restoring 'faith in the power of man to shape his own future.'"

With more foresight than he could have imagined, Viereck predicted that "Someone of Buckley's intellect and leadership capacities can become a 'national force.'"

Viereck's principal criticism expressed to Regnery about the economics of the book was its "sheer ennui."

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military economy." Viereck's characterization of laissez-faire economics as "desirable" in any context seems at odds with his persistent rejection of classic liberalism.

Viereck expressed a desire to have dinner with Regnery and "Buckley and his charming wife" and added a postscript.

PS: Rather than talk about a guy behind his back, I guess on second thought I'll send to Buckley (hoping the Mexican address I have, is where he is now) my carbon of this letter. And hoping he may take in stride the gauche candor of somebody admittedly so fallible as I.<sup>5</sup>

Despite Viereck's compliments, Buckley did not take it in stride.

Buckley responded to "Professor Peter Viereck," also at length. He began:

Dear Mr. Viereck:

So we're off!

Let me start off with the same "gauche candor" that you allowed yourself in your letter, by disagreeing emphatically with Henry Regnery when he termed your review a "good job." It really wasn't a good job because it was irrelevant and depressingly evasive.

Buckley summarized his perception of Viereck's criticisms, and asked "But why didn't you talk about my book?" He proceeded to justify the arguments in his book, including the coercive role of alumni in dictating curricula. If

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5. Peter Viereck to Henry Regnery, November 8, 1951, Viereck Papers.

alumni agree on an educational philosophy, "then no claptrap about academic freedom ought to stand in their way of reaching in and doing something about it." He then rebutted, point by point, Viereck's criticism as he had recast it, claiming for himself: a recognition of a "tyranny of the right"; unassailable anti-communism; a differentiation between the values attendant to religion and economics respectively; and an affinity for contemporary classic liberals such as Hayek and von Mises rather than the "political polemicist," Adam Smith. He then reacted to Viereck's perceived *ad hominem* criticisms, and aggressively challenged Viereck's devotion to the "Vital Center."

Buckley closed with "My kindest regards" and added a postscript in an apparent reference to Viereck's dinner suggestion:

P.S. I'm in Mexico indefinitely, and I'd love to hear from you if and when the spirit moves you. No invitation from Mount Holyoke has been forthcoming, so maybe you're losing your grip! Tout de même, it's academic, because I don't know when I'll next be in the States.<sup>6</sup>

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6. William F. Buckley, Jr. to Peter Viereck, December 12, 1951, Viereck Papers.

Henry Regnery read Buckley's letter and re-read Viereck's letter, and responded to Buckley, with a copy to Viereck. Regnery wrote:

The flaw I find in your letter is its finality; it pretty much makes any further discussion impossible. It shuts the door and I find this unfortunate....I had the feeling that [Viereck's letter] had been written in the spirit of good will, and with the intention of saying something that would be helpful. Now, in reading his letter again, I can't help but have the instinctive feeling that Viereck has a sense for the truth, for the larger relations between things; as a poet, perhaps he has something of that in him which Socrates speaks of when he talks of people who are "wise and knowing in divine things."

Regnery also advised Buckley that "... I think that you will before long see better than you seemed to in this book that economics must be modified by the Christian virtues." Regnery cautioned Buckley that he may need to address criticism "that you equate capitalism and Christianity, or confuse them," although Regnery did not agree with that criticism. "You must face Viereck's remark, in other words, that you would fire Leo XIII from the Yale faculty."<sup>7</sup> Regnery's hope for a constructive dialogue would not be realized. A reconciliation of

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7. Henry Regnery to William F. Buckley, Jr., December 20, 1951, Viereck Papers.

classic liberalism and Christian virtue would remain a conundrum.

In 1953 Viereck continued his criticism of Buckley in *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, in which he proposed to "examine once again *God and Man at Yale* by the intelligent, sincere and wrongheaded William H. [sic] Buckley, Jr."<sup>8</sup> After reiterating his defense of Buckley against charges of fascism, Viereck characterized Buckley's economic theories as "nineteenth-century liberalism" rather than conservative. The greater problem for Viereck was that "Buckley is reviving only half of that old liberalism, its free enterprise in economics, without its historical and logical counterpart: free enterprise in thought and teaching."<sup>9</sup> Viereck also lamented a missed opportunity. He wrote:

*God and Man at Yale* asks good questions and gives bad answers. It muffs a great opportunity for capitalistically challenging our economic statist *within* the framework of academic freedom and free debate. I believe democratic capitalism and conservatism can stand up well in free debate.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, 294.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 296.

The two adversaries would engage in an intellectual struggle for the heart and mind of an emerging political movement for the next decade.

Buckley was an idealist, at least initially, but not a philosopher. The author of fifty-seven books was unable to complete the one work of political philosophy that he began to write in 1963. "He was simply lost when he sat down and tried to elaborate a coherent political philosophy."<sup>11</sup> He was, however, together with his brother-in-law, L. Brent Bozell, the intellectual force that would propel Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan to the apex of the American conservative political movement.<sup>12</sup>

William F. Buckley, Sr., was the son of Irish Catholic immigrants. Will Buckley was born in Texas in

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11. Bogus, *Buckley*, 2. Buckley intended to title his work *The Revolt Against the Masses*. He attributed his failure to complete the book to the political climate in the mid-1960s. However, when he began writing, "he encountered philosophical contradictions in his own thinking that he could not resolve," particularly a reconciliation of his vilification of universal suffrage with his opposition to rule by an intellectual elite. For Buckley, it came down to the acceptability of beliefs, "the problem was their politics, not their qualifications." Buckley's philosophy professor at Yale had sensed that "Buckley may also have lacked the intellectual capacity for philosophical reflection." As a result of his failed attempt, "Buckley himself decided that he did not have a philosophical mind," and his perception of himself changed from theorist to commentator. Judis, *Buckley* 216-219.

12. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

1881, and graduated from the University of Texas Law School. Having moved to Mexico in 1908, he briefly practiced law in partnership with his three brothers, establishing a boutique law firm providing representation to major oil firms such as Standard Oil and British Petroleum. After several years Will turned to real estate investment and business. In 1914 he established a Mexican corporation engaged in oil exploration. Will also immersed himself in Mexican politics, somewhat improvidently. In 1921 he was expelled from Mexico and his assets were confiscated. Will relocated his oil exploration business to Venezuela, and teetered on the edge of financial ruin until his company struck oil in 1939. The Buckleys became immensely wealthy. Will was a *laissez faire* individualist who equated the New Deal with socialism, an America First isolationist, and deeply religious. Carl Bogus writes:

What sets Will Buckley apart from iconic figures who symbolize the transcendent power of the individual ... is his religiosity. Will Buckley is not merely a self-aggrandizer. He is virtuous, and for him his virtue comes from the only source from which true virtue can come, namely, from his devotion to God and the one true church.<sup>13</sup>

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13. Bogus, *Buckley*, 59.

Will Buckley was also anti-Semitic and a racist.

In 1917 Will had married Aloïse Steiner, the devoutly Catholic daughter of a New Orleans banker. Bill Buckley was born on November 24, 1925, the sixth of ten children. Will did not indoctrinate his children at the dinner table, but did regale them with tales of his adventures and experience in Mexico, conveying a sense of Wild-West individualism and the unreliability of government.

Despite the family wealth, the Buckleys were deemed *nouveau riche* and rejected by society. Rather than striving to achieve assimilation by sending the children to elite preparatory schools, in the fashion of another Irish Catholic son of immigrants in Boston, Will Buckley educated his children in less prestigious schools, in boarding schools abroad, and by establishing a homeschool to which local children were invited "in order to avoid the 'blight of Liberalism and Communism they will encounter in almost all elementary schools.'"<sup>14</sup> The social

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14. Ibid., 65. "The children were taught French and Spanish; their father sometimes hired private tutors rather than sending them to the local schools. It was the ideal training for a young conservative raised in the shadow of revolution: serious, confident, faintly aristocratic, and sharply critical of mere 'materialism.'" Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of The Conservative*

rejection also had a political implication for the Buckleys. Bogus writes:

Will and Aloïse's reaction to their rejection by the Establishment took on a political dimension. Aristocrats were influential in both parties.... With few variations, the aristocracy in both parties held similar ideological views that their prep schools deliberately reinforced. This has been described as a social gospel philosophy that believes in continuous social progress and assumes that capitalism, though good overall, suffers from certain unchristian practices.<sup>15</sup>

Bill would resist the anti-Semitism to which he was frequently exposed in his home as a child, but would be forever influenced by the rugged individualism, religiosity and hostility to the Eastern aristocracy manifested by his parents.

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*Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 78.

15. *Ibid.*, 62.

## The Contest for Hearts and Minds

"In 1945 no articulate, coordinated, self-consciously conservative intellectual force existed in the United States."<sup>16</sup> Politically, "Conservatism was moribund when Buckley founded *National Review* in 1955."<sup>17</sup> The conservative Senator Robert A. Taft, son of the twenty-seventh president and dubbed "Mr. Republican," had been overtaken by a succession of moderate, even self-styled "liberal" Republicans including Wendell Wilkie, Thomas Dewey and Dwight Eisenhower.<sup>18</sup> "Conservatism was not merely

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16. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, xx.

17. Bogus, *Buckley*, 7.

18. Taft, like Herbert Hoover, described himself as a liberal on occasion. However, Taft was then speaking in the context of the classic liberal who embraced *laissez faire* economic policy and limited government. Even so, despite his status as a conservative icon, Taft was moderately progressive. As a state legislator, he opposed regressive taxation and believed in maintaining the separation of church and state. Elected to the United States Senate in 1938, he supported old-age pensions, increasing payments for the health of mothers and children, and some unemployment insurance under Social Security." *Ibid.*, 29. He was a sponsor of federal home loans and public housing and federal aid to education, and an opponent of *de jure* racial discrimination. "He believed the government should combat poverty both for moral and practical reasons." *Ibid.*, 30. He opposed imperialism, and also opposition to the Soviet Union through either military or verbal confrontation. "'I do not believe,' he once said, 'that any war can be ho justified as a crusade.'" *Ibid.*, 33. He was a proponent of the international rule of law, and openly opposed the Nuremburg trials after World War II. "'The trial of the vanquished by the victors cannot be impartial no matter how it is hedged about with forms of justice,' he declared." *Ibid.*, 31. He was a pragmatist, who had no interest in reading Russell Kirk. *Ibid.*, 23-38.

out-of-favor; it was disrespected."<sup>19</sup> In addition to this absence of political leadership, "There was also a certain kind of intellectual vacuum. Both *The Freeman* and *The American Mercury* had ceased to be vital political publications."<sup>20</sup> Into this vacuum stepped the twenty-six year-old Buckley, along with forty-six year-old Frank S. Meyer, a libertarian ex-communist whom Buckley designated as book review editor, and fifty year-old James Burnham, a moderate Republican ex-communist and ex-Central

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Bogus asserts that Taft "followed the Burkean-style conservatism that we also call traditional conservatism." Ibid., 38. Bogus' use of "traditional" seems to suggest a homogeneity among American conservatives until the advent of Buckley's "new conservatism." Bogus is patently wrong in appropriating "new conservatism," a term so clearly identified with Viereck, Kirk and Rossiter, to label Buckley's restorationist conservatism. He is also inaccurate in his reference to "traditional" conservatism. While it can be argued that the Progressive movement in the early twentieth century was essentially conservative, conservatism was dominated prior to the New Deal by Old Guard Republicans who were classic economic liberals and aristocratic elitists, and was eviscerated by the New Deal. These Old Guard Republicans were anything but Burkean.

Taft's record as presented by Bogus establishes strong Burkean credentials. Nonetheless, Viereck dismissed Taft as an Old Guard Republican. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 100.

19. Bogus, *Buckley*, 7. "Political scientist Herbert McClosky conducted a series of sophisticated studies involving thousands of subjects.... 'By every measure available to us,' McClosky wrote in the *American Political Science Review* in 1952, 'conservative beliefs are found most frequently among the uninformed, the poorly educated, and so far as we can determine, the less intelligent.' ... It is perhaps telling that McClosky labeled the most conservative group 'Extreme Conservatives' and the most liberal group 'Liberals,' as if only people with very conservative views were extreme." Ibid., 8.

20. Judis, *Buckley*, 112.

Intelligence Agency officer.<sup>21</sup> Burnham became Buckley's closest confidant outside his own family and the de facto number two at *National Review*, the person who made decisions when Buckley was unavailable."<sup>22</sup>

"Buckley saw conservatism as a radical and dissenting philosophy."<sup>23</sup> Buckley himself was an ideologue, a libertarian, a neoconservative anti-communist, and a staunch Catholic. "Buckley's religious belief informed and underlay his opposition to communism and to unbridled individualism and materialism."<sup>24</sup>

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21. Burnham was an admirer of New York Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller. Bogus, *Buckley*, 18.

22. *Ibid.*, 19.

23. Judis, *Buckley*, 135.

24. *Ibid.*, 186. In his 1951 letter to Henry Regnery discussing Viereck's review of *God and Man at Yale*, Viereck expressed a different view. Viereck addressed an attack on the book "as Catholic." Repeating, in passing, his previous statement that he "defined Catholic-baiting as the anti-semitism of the liberals," Buckley described his response to the "as Catholic" attack. "I replied that unfortunately it was not Catholic enough in economics; it was the most Protestant book, I said, that I've ever read in my life." Viereck cited arguments proposing "capitalism as the Protestant ethic" and a succession of Catholic intellectual critics of capitalism. Viereck predicted that "[Buckley] may have to choose between being all Catholic (in religion and economics) or all Protestant." Peter Viereck to Henry Regnery, November 8, 1951, Viereck Papers.

Meyer was a pugnacious philosopher,<sup>25</sup> and a rationalist, whose political thought was the antithesis of that of Edmund Burke. Meyer wrote:

In any era the problem of conservatism is to find the way to restore the tradition of the civilization and apply it in a new situation. But this means that conservatism is by its nature two-sided. It must at one and the same time be reactionary and presentist. It cannot content itself with appealing to the past. The very circumstances that call conscious conservatism into being create an irrevocable break with the past....

Conservatism is neither reactionary yearning for an irremediably lost past, nor is it trimming acquiescence in the consolidation of revolution, just so long as the revolution does not go too fast....

It is absurd, therefore, because one conservative voice in one period showed an underlying hostility to reason, to maintain, as is today so often done, that Edmund Burke's attitude to reason is an essential element of any definition of conservatism.<sup>26</sup>

The restorationist language suggests that Meyer's reference to "tradition" is in an historical context

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25. In a memoir published shortly before his death, Buckley said of Meyer, "Frank was truly satisfied only when engaged in combat. It was a kind of physical exercise for him, the neglect of which gnawed at his convivial good humor, mostly exhibited after he had scored against the enemy." William F. Buckley, Jr., *Flying High: Remembering Barry Goldwater* (New York: Basic Books, Perseus Books Group, 2008), 156-157.

26. Frank S. Meyer, "Conservatism" in *Left, Right and Center: Essays on Liberalism and Conservatism in the United States*, ed. Robert A. Goldwin (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1965), 2.

rather than the evaluative context of Burke, Babbitt and Viereck.

Meyer sought to advance the idea of political and economic libertarianism by combining it with "the traditional and Christian emphasis on virtue as the end of society."<sup>27</sup> This synthesis was branded as *fusionism* by Brent Bozell, "one of its critics,"<sup>28</sup> a label to which Meyer did not subscribe.<sup>29</sup> Meyer wrote:

There are many strands in this movement, many trends in its thought. In particular there exists within it a continuing tension between an emphasis on tradition and virtue, on the one hand, and an emphasis on reason and freedom, on the other.<sup>30</sup>

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27. Judis, *Buckley*, 147. Buckley basically subscribed to Meyer's concept. In 1957 Whittaker Chambers published an essay critical of Ayn Rand's individualism in *National Review*. Chambers posited that "Individualism was not good in itself, but only as a means to civic and religious virtue. Chambers condemned objectivism as a cousin of Marxism." Buckley defended Chambers. "For Buckley, Chambers's essay revealed a way to reconcile conservatism with the Catholic critique of laissez-faire capitalism. Chambers had not demonstrated that individualism was wrong, but only that it was wrong if taken as an end in itself. He applauded Chambers' attempt to 'read Miss Rand out of the conservative movement.'" Judis, 161, quoting Buckley, "Notes Toward an Empirical Definition of Conservatism," in William F. Buckley, Jr., *The Jeweler's Eye* (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1968). (The essay first appeared in October, 1963.)

28. *Ibid.*

29. See Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 269.

30. Meyer, "Conservatism," 5.

There are more critical assessments of this "tension."

Claes Ryn states:

Fusionism provided a rationale of sorts for politically linking very diverse groups in a coalition against statism. The doctrine illustrated well the habit of *National Review* to gloss over or simply ignore glaring philosophical tensions or contradictions. The groups that the magazine tried to accommodate ranged from radical libertarians, who favored social atomism and untrammelled capitalism, to ultramontane Roman Catholics who stressed the communal aspects of human existence.<sup>31</sup>

Meyer's fusionism may represent a seminal moment in the evolution of the contemporary religious right. While fusionism is sometimes described as a blending of the new conservatism into libertarianism, Bogus writes:

It may be more accurate to say that Meyer attempted to blend libertarianism with what we today call religious conservatism. Meyer wrote, for example: "Conservatism assumes the existence of an objective moral order based upon ontological foundations. Whether or not individual conservatives hold theistic views -- and a large majority of them do -- this outlook is derived from a theistic tradition."<sup>32</sup>

It was Meyer who authored the highly critical review of Viereck in 1956.<sup>33</sup>

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31. Ryn, Foreword in *Aesthetic Origins*, xv.

32. Bogus, *Buckley*, 355 n. 18, quoting Frank S. Meyer, *In Defense of Freedom and Related Essays* (N.P: Liberty Fund, 1996), 10.

33. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 237.

Burnham was not a philosopher. He was a proponent of implementation of a "rollback" strategy by political warfare and military force, rather than the containment policy formulated by George Kennan. "But on other topics, Burnham was far less doctrinaire, and often viewed as a pragmatist."<sup>34</sup> A realist, he operated as a moderating influence on the ideological and idealistic Buckley, and on the content of *National Review*. Nonetheless, Burnham has been called "the first neoconservative" based upon his foreign policy.<sup>35</sup> "Burnham's views about the Cold War became conservative orthodoxy."<sup>36</sup>

This aggregation of diverse thought around the common thread of anti-communism succeeded in developing a broader

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34. Bogus, *Buckley*, 19.

35. Ibid. Bogus first defines neoconservatives as strict disciplinarians in terms of domestic policy on matters such as crime and government assistance to the poor, and subsequently as practitioners of *realpolitik* regarding national interest, interventionism and international policy. It is difficult to reconcile Burnham's admiration of Nelson Rockefeller with domestic neoconservatism. "It is a paradox that Burnham was generally a force for moderation and yet an extreme hard-liner within foreign affairs where his influence was greatest." Ibid., 20-21.

36. Ibid., 21.

theme. John Judis writes:

Buckley and *The National Review* editors identified the acceptance of the New Deal and the willingness to seek accord with the Soviet Union with liberalism. They therefore saw the leading opinion journals as liberal; and they saw the Eisenhower administration, which was maintaining the welfare state intact and which had already negotiated with the Soviet Union at Geneva, as acting in a liberal rather than conservative manner. Whether Eisenhower himself was a liberal was irrelevant.<sup>37</sup>

Buckley also recruited Russell Kirk, a leading voice, along with Viereck, among the communitarian New Conservatives. In 1953, in the same issue of the conservative periodical *The Freeman*, Buckley had published a "blistering" review of Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, and Meyer had published an article entitled "Collectivism Rebaptized" which was highly critical of Kirk.<sup>38</sup> Although Kirk declined to be listed as an editor, so as not to be associated with the ideology of Meyer and fellow-libertarian Frank Chodorov,<sup>39</sup> he became a regular

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37. Judis, *Buckley*, 135.

38. Bogus, *Buckley*, 109-110.

39. "I think it better for me not to be one of your editors for this reason: the members of my board of editorial advisors [at *The Conservative Review*], a highly disparate and crotchety group, agree to advise me chiefly because of my isolation and poverty, and their conviction that I serve no master. Were I to join any other group, there would be protests. Chodorov or Meyer, through some curious

contributor to *National Review* as a columnist. Bogus writes:

Kirk and Meyer both understood that Burkeanism and libertarianism were incompatible. They saw their philosophies engaged in a death struggle for the soul of conservatism. Their animosities became personal. It was evident to all that Meyer actively hated Kirk.<sup>40</sup>

Why Buckley and Kirk, two ideologically strange bedfellows? "Their relationship with symbiotic. From the time he resigned his appointment at Michigan State University in 1953, Kirk struggled to support himself by writing and lecturing."<sup>41</sup> Kirk needed to maintain his status as a conservative intellectual that would be attractive on the lecture circuit. The opportunity to

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notion of obtaining approval or of creating dissent within Conservative Review ranks, perhaps, sent copies of their anti-Kirk Freeman to all my advisors. Up went a great cry of jubilation -- not of approval for Chodorov and Meyer, but of this token of utter separation from simon-pure loonies." Russell Kirk to William F. Buckley, Jr., September 1, 1955, Buckley Papers, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT. Buckley responded, "There is much bitterness in your last letter, considerably more than that which Chodorov and Meyer feel toward you." William F. Buckley, Jr. to Russell Kirk, September 14, 1955, Buckley Papers.

40. Bogus, *Buckley*, 17.

41. *Ibid.*, 122. In a letter to William F. Buckley, Sr., Kirk declined an invitation to visit the elder Buckley, stating "Very good it would be to visit Sharon and talk with you all; but I have no money -- ...." Kirk also attempted to ingratiate himself by stating "I never have called myself a New Conservative, and no one has ever called me that to my face." Russell Kirk to William F. Buckley, Sr., July 13, 1955, Buckley Papers.

write a column for *National Review* was the means to maintain that status. Correspondingly, Kirk's stature as a conservative intellectual increased the prestige, and circulation, of *National Review*.

Intellectual and personal conflict notwithstanding, Buckley succeeded in coalescing within the staff of *National Review* the three strains of conservatism described by Nash, libertarianism, new conservatism and anti-communism, as well as the emerging neo-conservatism. Buckley proceeded to impose his will upon both the intellectual and political communities within American conservatism.

Bogus asks, "Why did Buckleyism prevail? How did Buckley pull it off?" In response to his own question, he states "The answer has little to do with the competing ideas themselves. The answer has to do with leadership."<sup>42</sup> This explanation is simplistic.

Buckley was no more systematic in the development of his ideology than was Viereck in proposing his concepts.

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42. Ibid., 138.

Bogus explains Buckley's appeal as follows:

He took a disparate collection of ideas -- some of which were contradictory or disdained even by leading conservatives of the day -- melded them together, and personally represented this new ideology so appealingly that many people became Buckley-style conservatives because they passionately admired William F Buckley, Jr.<sup>43</sup>

Buckley's principal advantage may have been his charisma. Buckley became a celebrity, writing a syndicated column carried three times each week by 205 newspapers, editing *National Review*, hosting the weekly television broadcast of *Firing Line*, and appearing as a guest on popular television shows, while Viereck composed poetry and taught Russian history at Mount Holyoke College.

Buckley was a strategist. "He did not place himself, alone, at the head of a column followers. He selected other leaders and promoted them and their ideas." Buckley employed a "divide and conquer strategy" when he "peeled off Russell Kirk, the new conservative with the greatest credibility within conservative ranks."<sup>44</sup> Buckley also was a zealot, a man with a mission. "When he believed other

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43. Ibid., 1.

44. Ibid., 38.

conservative leaders offered ideas that threatened his core vision, he deftly marginalized them or decisively excommunicated them. In all these ways and more, Buckley created a movement."<sup>45</sup>

The New Conservatives, according to Bogus, lacked the necessary resolve. He writes:

None of the new conservatives had anything like the organizational and political skills -- or the single-minded dedication to a cause -- that Buckley possessed. Rossiter, Viereck and Nisbet were all academics, with all that implies. They were interested in ideas and animated by the classroom. Kirk also was foremost a scholar. They lived in places like Ithaca, New York; South Hadley, Massachusetts; Riverside, California; and Mecosta, Michigan. Viereck and Rossiter wanted the new conservatism to prevail, but neither considered that cause to be his principal ambition. When the going got tough, Viereck retreated into poetry and Rossiter retreated into denial. Buckley, however, considered the conservative cause to be his life's mission, and he believed that the fate of his nation might depend on his success. The new conservatives were all talented and formidable individuals -- but they were individuals. They never cohered as a group, and there is no evidence that they ever considered doing so.<sup>46</sup>

The inability of New Conservatives to prevail over libertarianism may be, in some respects, the product of

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45. Ibid., ix.

46. Ibid., 138-139.

personality and human nature. The caustic, charismatic and myopic Buckley certainly had an inherent advantage over the academics.

However, Viereck, Nisbet and Rossiter were no less committed to their respective ideas than was Buckley to his. "Competing ideas" had everything to do with it. The competition, however, was not between Edmund Burke and Friedrich Hayek. The competing ideas were intellectual absolutism and freedom of thought.

The "idea" that dominated American political thought between 1949 and 1962, and decades thereafter in large part, was anti-communism. Viereck, no less than Buckley, was an anti-Communist.<sup>47</sup> In *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals* Viereck had contrasted the complacency toward Stalinism within the American intellectual

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47. The final section of *Conservative Thinkers*, entitled "Relevance of Burke-Paine Debate Today," states "To many semi-Marxist intellectuals of the 1930's, the ghost of Burke was a pariah. Had not Marx himself damned Burke forever for slandering the French Revolution? But in the "cold war" of the 1950's, after American disillusionment with radical utopias, Burke was as eagerly studied by anti-communists as he once had been by anti-Jacobins." Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 108. Viereck originally entitled this essay "America Rediscovered Burke as Anti-Communist Weapon." Peter Viereck Papers.

community with its opposition to Nazism. In 1953 he wrote:

Today Americans cannot afford to forget the earlier of our two resistances to totalitarianism.

So may that past ordeal be our future courage. So may the memory become a hope. So may the sunrise of the rediscovery of values dispel that planet-darkening shadow in which Kremlin and Berchtesgarden merge as one.

Then for a second time in one century and by a reversal of astronomy the sun will rise in the west.<sup>48</sup>

These ironically romantic words fully convey Viereck's antipathy toward Stalinist Russia. The difference between Buckley, who adopted Chamber's perspective of a moral contest between good and evil, and Viereck, who attributed such complacency to a lapse of humanistic values, is analogous to the difference between law and ethics, and between emotion and thought. No item on the national political agenda lent itself more readily to manipulation than communism, and its consolidated governmental, economic and religious implications.

Post-World War I isolationism in the 1920s, the Depression of the 1930s, and the alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union during World War II

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48. Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, xii.

combined to impede a popular assessment of communism prior to 1945. This obscurity, combined with an initial attraction in the 1930s of many intellectuals to a collectivist vision of social justice, set the stage for the traumatic impact on the American psyche of the "Iron Curtain," the ascendancy of Mao Tse-Tung in China and the revelation of the nuclear capability of the Soviet Union. The blockade of Berlin in 1948, the trials of Alger Hiss in 1949 and early 1950, the hostilities in Korea beginning in June of 1950, the indictments of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in August of 1950, and President Truman's recall of General Douglas MacArthur in April of 1951 caught the attention of the American public. Ambivalence in American foreign and military policy was difficult for the average American to understand. The result was predictable. Viereck wrote:

The typical book titles of our age are not the *Age of Reason* (typical eighteenth-century title of Paine) but *The Age of Longing*, *The Age of Anxiety*, *The Politics of Murder*, *The Strategy of Terror*, *The Age of Terror*. Such representative book titles, with their mood of 1983 and eleven months, could only have been written in the century in which Nietzsche hypothesized: "With every growth in man's stature, he

grows in depth and terribleness too. Where are the Vandals of the 20th century?"<sup>49</sup>

Into the breach charged Senator Joseph McCarthy.

Buckley, having established his credentials as a conservative with the publication of *God and Man at Yale*, increased his notoriety with the co-authorship (together with his former debate partner at Yale and brother-in-law, L. Brent Bozell) and publication in 1954 of *McCarthy and His Enemies: The Record and its Meaning*.<sup>50</sup> Buckley had been "shaken" by *Witness*, the memoir published by ex-communist Whittaker Chambers in 1952. Chambers portrayed the struggle between communism and the West as a contest between good and evil, reinforcing Buckley's existing perception. There was a natural affinity between Buckley and McCarthy. Both were anti-establishment and Catholic.<sup>51</sup> While other Republican conservatives, and some Democrats,

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49. Ibid., 3.

50. William F. Buckley, Jr. and L. Brent Bozell, *McCarthy and His Enemies: The Record and its Meaning* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954). Buckley had originally proposed to his publisher a book that would "examine the claims of Peter Viereck, August Heckscher *inter alia* to representing the 'legitimate conservatism.'" However, his attention was drawn to the McCarthy controversy. Judis, *Buckley*, 104, quoting the Buckley papers.

51. Bogus, *Buckley*, 97-98.

exercised caution in their association with McCarthy, and failed to repudiate McCarthy when his demagoguery became apparent, Buckley published a defense of McCarthyism.

Bogus wrote:

Buckley and Bozell argued that one of the goals of McCarthyism was to stigmatize those who espoused communist ideas. They called this the "new conformity," and they endorsed it. Once again, they claimed to want to draw a distinction between communism and liberalism. It is, they said, "only *Communist* ideas that are beyond the pale." ...

The authors, moreover, were not just subtly questioning the patriotism of liberals, but of the American government. The central thesis of their book was that while McCarthy the man was sometimes irresponsible, McCarthyism served the country well.<sup>52</sup>

The distinctions that Buckley and Bozell claimed to draw were somewhat sophistic, and certainly would have been lost on the typical American if the book had been successfully marketed and widely read. It was not. The book did cause Buckley some problems, even among anti-communists. Judis writes:

If *God and Man at Yale* had given Buckley the reputation of an enfant terrible among the eastern intelligentsia, *McCarthy and His Enemies* made him a

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52. Ibid., 103. In the memoir published shortly before his death, Buckley described *McCarthy and His Enemies* as "a detailed analysis of the charges McCarthy had made against the State Department." He wrote, "The book argued that, in most cases, McCarthy had been justified." Buckley, *Flying High*, 22.

pariah. When Sol Stein, the executive secretary of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, agreed to serve on an anti-communist committee that Buckley was helping to organize, Daniel Bell, a member of the ACCF's board, warned Stein that "officers of the ACCF should not collaborate with an apologist for Senator McCarthy."<sup>53</sup>

However, the "new conformity" became a fundamental tenet of conservatism that would ultimately extend beyond communism. Two years later Viereck would publish *The Unadjusted Man in the Age of Overadjustment*, which decried an age of conformity and lamented the prevalence of stereotypes rather than archetypes.

*God and Man at Yale* and *McCarthy and His Enemies*, on the one hand, and *The Unadjusted Man*, on the other, frame one fundamental difference between the political thought of Buckley and that of Viereck. That difference is freedom of thought. Viereck, beginning with his condemnation of unrestrained romanticism in *Metapolitics*, and continuing with his development of the concept of the Unadjusted Man in *Unadjusted Man*, focused on the danger of intellectual conformity. Buckley, on the other hand, was an advocate of indoctrination and impressed conformity.

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53. Judis, *Buckley*, 110, quoting the Buckley Papers.

By 1955 the predominance of Buckleyism over New Conservatism, of intellectual absolutism over freedom of thought, was preordained. The root cause of the inevitability was not intellectual superiority of the idea or moral force, and not simply leadership capacity, tactics, or even personality traits. Buckley had a more marketable product to sell in a culture shaped by international events and domestic news, and some manipulation by political actors. Buckley was also a better salesman.

The intellectual ascendancy was not immediately matched by events on the political landscape. George Nash writes:

Eisenhower's first term had been marked by "easy and wholehearted acceptance" of "the great statist legacy of the New Deal." The Republican program was at best one of "measured socialism." Buckley realized that for many conservatives the liberal Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson, made Eisenhower appealing by contrast. Nevertheless, he warned, the choice in 1956 was only a choice between evils.<sup>54</sup>

While "creeping socialism" alarmed many conservatives, "In 1959 Buckley himself conceded that conservatives had yet

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54. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 395, quoting William F. Buckley, Jr., "Reflections on Election Eve," *National Review*, November 3, 1956, 6-7.

to persuade the public about the dangers of the welfare state and the validity of conservative principles."<sup>55</sup> Now a realist, Buckley accepted the invulnerability of some New Deal reforms, even if he did not embrace the New Deal. Judis writes:

Buckley acknowledged that the value of social security had been "politically secured." He acknowledged that social security had contributed real security to Americans and that "political opposition to deeply imbedded welfarist carbuncles is futile."

These were important admissions, equivalent to Burnham's admission that trying to free Eastern Europe before war was politically futile. But in *Up from Liberalism* Buckley stopped short of Viereck's or Bundy's "new conservative" position that social security was part of the status quo that must be defended.<sup>56</sup>

Buckley still envisioned prevailing in the long term, even with respect to social security.<sup>57</sup> In the short term, Buckley returned to his roots as an anti-communist.

Buckley had persistently criticized Eisenhower for his failure to comprehend and confront communism. The Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, the visit of Nikita

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55. Ibid., 400.

56. Judis, *Buckley*, 170, quoting William F. Buckley, Jr., *Up from Liberalism* (New York: Honor Books, 1965), 169, 189, 179.

57. Ibid., 170-171.

Khrushchev to the United States in 1959, and Soviet advances in Cuba, Africa and Indochina all reinforced warnings of the "red menace" and invective regarding the horrors of communism. "Not surprisingly, *National Review* declined to endorse a presidential candidate in 1960; Meyer could detect no grounds for preferring a Richard Nixon to John Kennedy."<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, Buckley perceived Kennedy's election to be a "defeat for conservatives."<sup>59</sup> Conservative criticism continued after the immediate foreign policy failures of Kennedy in 1961 at the Bay of Pigs, at a meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna, and over the crisis in Berlin.

Conservatives "demanded a policy of victory in the cold war" to save Western civilization, described by Brent Bozell as "'a Christian *civilization*.'"<sup>60</sup> This demand was accompanied by rejection of the United Nations, advocacy of maintenance of military supremacy, and opposition to disarmament.

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58. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 398.

59. Judis, *Buckley*, 179.

60. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 424-425.

The realism that Buckley expressed with regard to public response to the evolving welfare state also existed in the context of foreign policy.<sup>61</sup> That realism altered the conservative strategy. Nash writes:

There is probably no better proof of the isolation of the conservative intellectual movement from American politics in the 1950s than its estrangement from the immensely popular President Eisenhower.... The defense of Western civilization required that their ideas be implemented, and the war could not be fought solely in academic journals or in *National Review*. Sooner or later the conservative intellectual movement, if you wanted to succeed, would have to shape *political* forces and prevail in the *political* marketplace.<sup>62</sup>

And that is precisely what Buckley and his cohort proceeded to do. "He had become the acknowledged spokesman of the 'hard Right.'"<sup>63</sup>

In addition to charisma and zealotry, Buckley benefited, with some irony, from political events,

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61. The criticism had limits. Buckley, Burnham and Chambers "repeatedly quarreled with Bozell and Meyer over how aggressive the U.S. should be in pressing liberation and denouncing any accommodation with the Soviet Union. Buckley had refused to print an article from Meyer and Bozell calling for a preemptive strike against the Soviet Union." This decision was also a manifestation only of political realism. "Buckley saw a nuclear first strike as impolitic rather than unprincipled." *Ibid.*, 174-175.

62. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 398-399.

63. Judis, *Buckley*, 180.

movements and personalities in the early 1960s. Judis explains:

To the immense surprise of Buckley and the other *National Review* editors, the American Right also emerged from the cocoon in which it had slumbered since the early fifties. If Kennedy's and King's idealism inspired a new liberal movement, and if Malcolm X stimulated a radical left, these developments also provided Buckley and the Right with the visible enemies and burning issues that they had lacked in the bland Eisenhower years.<sup>64</sup>

The same factors conversely created a problem for Buckley. "If Kennedy in Washington threatened to solidify the liberal hold over government, the new southern segregationists and the John Birch Society threatened to make a responsible opposition impossible."<sup>65</sup>

Buckley's attitude concerning racial equality had evolved in the late 1950s. When the rhetoric of southern segregationists moved from constitutional arguments to the racism of George Wallace, Buckley rejected segregation, while still advocating states' rights and positing that segregation would ultimately fall under its own weight.<sup>66</sup>

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64. *Ibid.*, 183.

65. *Ibid.*, 184.

66. *Ibid.*, 191-193.

Buckley's approach to the John Birch Society was a progression. Judis writes:

Buckley's attitude toward the right-wing anti-Communist movement had not shifted significantly from the first days of *National Review*, but the movement itself had become more hysterical. Buckley had always exaggerated the Soviet military and diplomatic threat to the United States, but he had never shared the view of McCarthy's most rabid followers that American Communists posed a serious threat to the nation's survival. Buckley and the other *National Review* editors believed that, besides the Soviet Union, the main danger came from American Liberals, who, although sincerely anti-Communist, underestimated the Soviet threat.<sup>67</sup>

*National Review* initially was critical only of Robert Welch, who had founded the Society in 1958, but ultimately denounced the Society itself.<sup>68</sup> There was adverse reaction within the conservative community. Judis writes:

But Buckley's attack on the John Birch Society was an important step forward for Buckley, *National Review*, and the conservatives who looked to them for leadership. By disassociating conservatism from the John Birch Society, Buckley showed that he, *National Review*, and the Goldwater conservatives accepted the legitimacy of their political opponents, even if they differed from them on every major question. The attack established them as the "responsible Right" and moved them out of the crackpot far Right and toward the great center of American politics, ....<sup>69</sup>

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67. Ibid., 193.

68. Bogus, *Buckley*, 174-198; Judis, *Buckley*, 193-200.

69. Judis, *Buckley*, 200.

In the same way that proponents of liberalism and racial equality on the left had ironically created a milieu for the advance of Buckleyism, segregationists and extremists on the right had provided a stage for the ascendancy of Buckley. Judis continues:

Buckley's attack on the John Birch Society also transformed him as a public figure. He was no longer the pariah of the McCarthy days. He was a public representative of the new conservatism that television producers and college deans could invite to appear without provoking an outcry. Whether intentionally or not, Buckley's attack on the John Birch Society prepared the way for his own celebrity.<sup>70</sup>

Other forces had already been at work, promoting a 1960 presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater.

In 1959 Bozell wrote what Barry Goldwater would publish as *Conscience of a Conservative*.<sup>71</sup> In 1960 the

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70. Ibid. "Overall, becoming a celebrity drew Buckley farther out of the narrower circle of conservative organizations and student groups to which he had spent much of his time speaking. He had to frame his arguments within the prevailing political assumptions. He had to accept, finally, the growing popular unanimity around such subjects as civil rights in the South. And he became less tolerant of the far Right and more tolerant of liberals." Ibid., 209.

71. Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (2001; repr. New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 51-53, 61-63. "Bozell and Goldwater met in August 1959 to hash out the book; after the meeting, Bozell wrote to Manion that Goldwater seemed 'a little poetic and corny' in the way he wanted to

Young Americans for Freedom were formed with the drafting of the Sharon Statement at Buckley's home in Connecticut, expressing "*National Review's* and Frank Meyer's attempt to fuse traditionalism, libertarianism, and anticommunism."<sup>72</sup> Buckley "did not take an active role in YAF, but he was kept constantly abreast of what was happening in the organization by [Marvin] Liebman and [William] Rusher and made speeches for YAF when called upon." He "played a similar catalytic but not organizational role in the founding of New York Conservative Party" in 1961.<sup>73</sup> Although the Goldwater candidacy had no hope of success and never materialized, the effort generated an energy that persisted, particularly within the Young Americans for Freedom.<sup>74</sup> Buckley had "a tiger by the tail."

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state his views but that most likely they could work out a manuscript." Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 127.

72. Judis, *Buckley*, 189.

73. Judis, *Buckley*, 190. Buckley, generally, "disliked meetings and faction fighting [and] preferred to play an inspirational rather than an organizational role." *Ibid.*, 188.

74. *Ibid.*, 190.

Although Buckley was initially part of the Goldwater cadre,<sup>75</sup> the Goldwater team believed that an association with Buckley could reinforce the perception that Goldwater was a fringe candidate. In September of 1963 Goldwater's team acted. Rick Perlstein recounts:

Bill Buckley had approached Jay Hall with some ideas for the campaign. Hall lured him to a dinner with Kitchel and Baroody to discuss them. Then Baroody leaked news of the meeting to one of his contacts at the New York Times -- who dutifully ventriloquized Baroody's story that "The Goldwater For President ship just repelled a boarding party" that had "cornered some Goldwater aides" for a "share of the Goldwater command." No more William F. Buckley.<sup>76</sup>

Buckley, looking back on the event in his memoir about Goldwater, wrote:

Brent Bozell and I were nowhere to be seen in the front lines of Barry Goldwater's campaign. We could guess the principal reason for this early on -- the megalomania of Bill Baroody -- but speculation ended after Goldwater's first autobiography, in 1979. Indeed William Baroody, on whom Barry relied, had passed the word down that the candidate should distance himself personally and professionally from "the *National Review* people."

That meant concretely, Brent Bozell, the author of *The Conscience of a conservative*, and me, the editor and founder of *National Review* and, as such,

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75. Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 156.

76. *Ibid.*, 255; See Judis, *Buckley*, 222-224. In his memoir Buckley referred to the "boarding party" and wrote, "The story line should have been transparent, but neither Brent nor I, in our innocence, had grasped it." Buckley, *Flying High*, 82.

putative godfather of the conservative movement which Goldwater represented on the political front.<sup>77</sup>

Buckley, in fact, already had little enthusiasm for a Goldwater candidacy in 1964. "Bill Buckley had been skeptical about Goldwater presidential maneuvers since Clarence Manion invited him to join his endeavor in 1959."<sup>78</sup> Buckley's position reflected his increasing orientation to practical politics. "If conservatism overreached before it's time, it risked a setback of decades. Then there was the problem of Goldwater himself."<sup>79</sup> Buckley provided his caustic assessment of Goldwater's capacity. Perlstein writes:

Buckley had had a conversation recently with Richard Clurman, *Time's* chief of correspondents, who had gone from an editors' lunch with Goldwater to a dinner party with Buckley -- where Clurman wondered aloud just what was Barry Goldwater's appeal to this brilliant, and urbane man he respected. "Barry Goldwater is a man of tremendously decent instincts,

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77. Buckley, *Flying High*, 183. When Buckley ran for New York City Mayor in 1965, he expressly declined to use Goldwater's endorsement. "This would have, I reasonably deduced, the effect on Goldwater of acutely reminding him of the rebuff of me and *National Review* during his own campaign." *Ibid.*, 187. Despite the bruising and resentment in the 1960s, Buckley concludes his memoir forty years later by writing of Goldwater, "No one else comes to mind who sustained for so long a comparable reputation for candor and courage." *Ibid.*, 191-192.

78. Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 471.

79. *Ibid.*, 472.

and with a basic banal but important understanding of the Constitution and what it means in American life," Buckley explained.

"But what could happen if he were elected president of the United States?" Clurman asked.

"That," Buckley quipped, "might be a serious problem."<sup>80</sup>

Buckley, referring to the Goldwater candidacy, told the 1964 convention of the Young Americans for Freedom, much to its dismay, "a great rainfall has deluged a thirsty earth, but before we had time to properly prepare for it."<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, a record 3.9 million Americans worked for the Goldwater campaign, more than twice the number who actively worked for Lyndon Johnson, and over one million Americans contributed to the Goldwater campaign, compared with Nixon's 44,000 donors in 1960.<sup>82</sup>

Ironically, insofar as Buckley was concerned, the beneficiary of this premature rise of conservative activism was that same Richard Nixon whom had been shunned

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80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid., 473. "The Goldwater experience had not seriously demoralized him. Instead it increased measurably his involvement in electoral politics." Judis, 233.

by *National Review* in 1960. Perlstein explains:

Nixon was one of the few outsiders to understand what was happening: that the delegates he addressed at the Cow Palace would be controlling the nomination in 1968, even if Barry Morris Goldwater didn't win a single electoral vote in 1964.

That was why Nixon was the only Republican of national stature not to abandon the Goldwater ticket. He gave 156 speeches for Goldwater in the fall of 1964 and repeated his every-other-year ritual of campaigning for any Republican aspirant who invited him in godforsaken burgs in 36 states.<sup>83</sup>

Buckley and Nixon were not mutual admirers. In 1965 "Nixon told a group of journalists 'the Birchers could be handled, but that the real menace to the Republican Party came from the Buckleyites.'"<sup>84</sup> However, both Buckley and Goldwater supported the Nixon nomination in 1968, despite a potential challenge from a political newcomer named Ronald Reagan.<sup>85</sup>

The New Right would coalesce around Reagan's unsuccessful challenge to nomination of Gerald Ford in 1976, and Reagan's candidacy in 1980. The era of liberal Republicans and moderate conservatism, of Henry Cabot

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83. Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (2008; repr. New York: Scribner, 2009), 64.

84. *Ibid.*, 130.

85. *Ibid.*, 282.

Lodge, Nelson Rockefeller, William Scranton, Clifford Case and George Romney, closed. Buckley's vision ultimately prevailed in the world of politics.

"Why did Buckleyism prevail? How did Buckley pull it off?"<sup>86</sup> As previously discussed, Buckley had a rare combination of charisma and zeal that found the perfect environment in the external forces and events in the early 1960s. Finally, Buckley, an ideologue, had a capacity for personal evolution, evidenced by his transition from would-be philosopher to commentator,<sup>87</sup> his metamorphosis from catalyst to activist,<sup>88</sup> and his acquired tolerance of the political center.<sup>89</sup>

In the year before his death, Viereck gave his own eulogy for the new conservatism:

"Conservatism Revisited" had "opened people's minds to the idea that to be conservative is not to be satanic." But, he said, "once their minds were opened, Buckley came in."<sup>90</sup>

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86. Bogus, *Buckley*, 138.

87. See n. 11, *supra*.

88. See n. 73, *supra*, n. 82, *supra*.

89. See n. 70, *supra*.

90. Tom Reiss, "The First Conservative: How Peter Viereck inspired -- and lost -- a movement," *New Yorker*, October 24, 2005.

## CHAPTER 6.

### WHAT WENT WRONG?

When *Conservatism Revisited* was republished in 1962, the original text was designated as Book 1 and "The New Conservatism -- What Went Wrong?" was added as Book 2. Viereck, referencing his 1940 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*,<sup>1</sup> described "new conservatism ('new' meaning non-Republican, non-commercialist, non-conformist)" as "synthesizing in some future way the ethical New Deal social reforms with the more pessimistic, anti-mass insights of America's Burkean founders."<sup>2</sup> He lamented the current state of the idea, which he failed to foresee. Viereck's "new conservatism" had been hijacked by the New Right.<sup>3</sup> In 1962 Viereck wrote:

Today the new conservatism has at least half way degenerated into a façade for either plutocratic

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1. Peter Viereck, "But I'm a Conservative,...," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1940.

2. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 133.

3. "The New Right" is an ambiguous term. Bogus inappropriately describes the "New Conservatism" as the "New Right" in contrast to the Old Guard Republicans. Viereck and the New Conservatives applied the term to McCarthyism. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 170, 186, 208. Nash describes both the Buckley-Goldwater movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the Religious Right that evolved in the 1980s as the "New Right." Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 458, 557-559.

profiteering or fascist-style thought control nationalism, that same fascist nationalism against which the book had proposed liberal-conservative unity.<sup>4</sup>

Viereck, with hindsight, added Book 2 to address "along with what is valid in the *cultural* new conservatism, the ways in which the *political* new conservatism has become harmful to American traditions of freedom."<sup>5</sup>

"The main defect of the new conservatism, threatening to make it a transient fad irrelevant to the real needs, is its rootless nostalgia for roots." Singling out romanticist Southern conservatives, he continued, "Their unhistorical appeal to history, their traditionless worship of tradition, characterizes the conservatism of writers like Russell Kirk."<sup>6</sup>

American history is based on the similarity of moderate liberalism and moderate conservatism. The American Constitution is "a blend of Locke's very moderate liberalism and Burke's very moderate conservatism."<sup>7</sup>

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4. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 60.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, 134.

7. *Ibid.*, 135. Viereck acknowledges the alternate theory of democratic liberalism propounded by Louis Hartz, that the American

The history of continental Europe, however, is based on the dissimilarities between the extreme varieties of liberalism and conservatism. "But some American new conservatives import from continental Europe a conservatism that totally rejects even our moderate native liberalism."<sup>8</sup> One inevitable byproduct of this European conservatism is a failure to distinguish between "conservative authority" and "right-wing authoritarianism." This ultimately happened.

It went wrong on both the intellectual and practical levels. It begins with McCarthy. After praising the new conservatives who "have always been active and effective foes of thought-control nationalism," and stood against McCarthy "when it still took courage, not opportunism, to attack him," Viereck laid down an indictment. He wrote:

The same cannot be said of other, often better-known "new conservatives." They failed the acid test of the McCarthy temptation of the 1950s in the same way that the fellow-traveler kind of liberal failed the acid

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political ethos is that of Lockean liberalism rather than a conservative Constitution. If that is the case, "So we come full circle in America's political paradox: our conservatism, in the absence of medieval feudal relics, must grudgingly admit it has little real tradition to conserve except that of liberalism -- which then turns out to be a relatively conservative liberalism." Ibid., 146.

8. Ibid.

test of the communist temptation of the 1930s. Both temptations were not only ethical tests of integrity but also psychological tests of balance and aesthetic tests of good taste.<sup>9</sup>

In this one statement he condemned Russell Kirk, as well as Frank Meyer and Whittaker Chambers, the former communists recruited by Buckley to *National Review*.<sup>10</sup> His criticism of Kirk does not end there. Viereck wrote:

Let us partly overlook Kirk's silence about the McCarthy thought-control menace in Chicago. Let us partly overlook his lack of silence in supporting as so-called "new conservatives" the Goldwater Manchester Liberals of Old Guard Republicanism ....<sup>11</sup>

What Viereck would not overlook in 1962 is Kirk's failure to advocate for desegregation, just as historic conservatives, including Burke and John Adams, "have

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9. Ibid., 144.

10. Viereck subsequently refers to "the earlier silence of Kirk and most of his group about McCarthy, and their own frequent adoption of McCarthyism-minus-McCarthy" in an apparent reference to Kirk's association with Buckley and *National Review*, and to the Buckley-Bozell authorship of *McCarthy and His Enemies*. Ibid., 148.

11. Ibid., 144. In his letter to William F. Buckley, Sr., Kirk claimed that "Ironically enough, all this silly business about my debate with Schlesinger at Harvard was caused by my defending McCarthy and his Enemies!" Russell Kirk to William F. Buckley, Sr., July 13, 1955, Buckley Paper.

fought racism as contradicting our traditional Christian view of man."<sup>12</sup>

It ends with Barry Goldwater. Viereck faulted Goldwater for the latter's *laissez faire* economics (unless "protection of a privileged industry is involved"), and hypocrisy in the his ostensible defense of civil liberties (having defended McCarthy and failed the test of whether one is "sincere about civil liberties or merely a rightist authoritarian").<sup>13</sup> Viereck also continues his denigration of Kirk, referring to Kirk as "the Senator's mouthpiece and court philosopher"<sup>14</sup> while castigating both Goldwater

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12. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 145. Claes Ryn offer the possibility of a less ideological reason for the enmity toward Kirk expressed by Viereck in Book 2 of *Conservatism Revisited*. "Perhaps partly because the more prolific Russell Kirk was overshadowing him, Viereck, who had initially been very favorable to him, became critical and finally hostile." Ryn, Foreword in *Aesthetic Origins*, xvi.

13. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 145, 149.

14. Ibid., 149. "Kirk has been singled out for extended analysis because he is not the least but the most respectable of 'his group.' And 'respectable' is being used not in the stuffy sense or the snobbish sense of being intellectually and ethically respectable. 'His group' means the that whole inconsistent spectrum of Goldwater intellectuals and right-radical magazines." Viereck condemns Kirk, not for being wrong, but for being "morally evasive." Ibid., 150-151. Viereck was unrelenting in his criticism of Kirk. In 1970 Viereck was asked by *The New York Times* to review Kirk's *Enemies of the Permanent Things: Observations of Abnormalities in Literature and Politics* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969). Viereck wrote a scathing review that repeatedly attacked Kirk personally. A proof of the review was prepared, but the review was never published. Viereck Papers.

and Kirk for their mere separation from, rather than repudiation of, Robert Welch and the John Birch Society.<sup>15</sup>

Viereck was not an alarmist driven by the immediate political situation. "Nixon was -- Goldwater is -- an ephemeral fad, neither so evil nor so good as their foes and friends believe; ...."<sup>16</sup> The true tragedy for Viereck was the new orthodoxy imposed by *National Review* and Old Guard Republicans which "denies the label 'conservative' to those of us who support trade unionism and who selectively support many New Deal reforms."<sup>17</sup> They had failed to heed the admonition by Edmund Burke in 1790. "'A

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15. In January of 1962, at a "council of war" in Palm Beach, Florida, "Buckley and Kirk said they were ready to write the Birchers out of the conservative movement altogether. Goldwater and others counseled accommodation." Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 156. In 1965 *National Review* "condemned the entire society." Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 462.

16. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 151.

17. *Ibid.*, 143. Viereck also wrote that "there seems no doubt at all that the finest conservative episode in American history, since the miracle of the Federalist papers, is the 1952 presidential campaign of Adlai Stevenson," and that "the creative role of Adlai Stevenson has been the perfect object-lesson of how to attain liberal and conservative synthesis; ...." *Ibid.*, 153. Viereck openly praised Stevenson in 1956. This hardly endeared Viereck to Buckley conservatives, and incurred the wrath of Frank Meyer. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 237. Viereck also quotes with approval Walter Lippmann's description of the incumbent President, John F. Kennedy, as a similarly synthetic figure. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 154.

state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.'"18

Book 2 is Viereck's valediction. Denied the status of "conservative" by the dominant Buckley-Goldwater faction, he asked:

How can thoughtful new conservatives, avoiding the political pitfalls that so many have failed to avoid, apply fruitfully to American life today what we call non-political "cultural conservatism" -- ...? Let them apply our classical humanist values against what Melville called "the impieties of progress."<sup>19</sup>

Viereck, ever the realist, comprehended what had happened, and what the future held. American political conservatism would never again in Viereck's lifetime embrace Edmund Burke, Irving Babbitt, or Adlai Stevenson.

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18. Ibid., 142.

19. Ibid., 136.

PART IV

THE NEW CONSERVATISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

## CHAPTER 7.

### VIERECK IN 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AMERICA

The matters which concerned Peter Viereck are continuing political dilemmas. It was not McCarthy or Goldwater, or electoral outcomes, which preoccupied Viereck. It was the political aspects of moral values (vs. relativism), tradition (vs. rationalism), institutions (vs. pragmatism), organic society (vs. atomistic society), and qualitative liberty (vs. egalitarianism); it was pluralism, social justice and rule of law; it was civil liberties; it was thought-control, conformity, materialism, and nationalism. It was Burke's moral imagination and capacity for change. How do these concepts apply to politics and society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

#### **Domestic Affairs**

Peter Viereck's assessment of the State of the Union, and conservatism, would not be favorable.<sup>1</sup> In the

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1. Statements in the text concerning and describing contemporary political events are intended to be points of reference, even at the risk of vagueness. It is not within the scope of this study to argue the wisdom, or lack thereof, underlying these events.

*Introduction to the 2004 edition of Unadjusted Man*, he wrote:

What now is called Republican Party conservatism is a mix of old laissez-faire in economics (not in thought), jingoistic nationalism (a contradiction of laissez-faire tolerance), and politicized piety. Clearly this is hardly what I described in the 1949 of *Conservatism Revisited*.<sup>2</sup>

This critique would probably be reiterated in 2015.

Beginning with *Conservatism Revisited* in 1949, Viereck was a persistent critic of plutocracy. He railed against Old Guard conservatives who adhered to classic liberalism in the form of *laissez faire* economics. He perceived Buckley and Goldwater as the conservators of this philosophy.

Viereck, a relentless critic of materialism, likely would be concerned by the income inequality that has become magnified since his death in 2006. In 2004 he wrote "Noblesse oblige is what the plutocratic Republican Party and the big corporations are mostly lacking."<sup>3</sup> He also may have favored the significant increase in the minimum wage occurring in many locales and sectors in

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2. Viereck, *Unadjusted Man*, xvi.

3. *Ibid.*, xiii.

America in 2015. He generally favored laws protecting the rights of workers. "Since the industrial revolution, conservatism is neither justifiable nor effective unless it has roots in the factories and trade unions."<sup>4</sup> The concern for labor was fundamental to his concept of humanistic conservatism. In 1949 Viereck wrote:

If humane social reforms seem "socialistic" or are against the fetish of laissez faire economics, that is not a substantial moral objection. When did we ever have laissez faire, and why is any merely material and economic system more sacred than the moral duty of compassion for want?<sup>5</sup>

His assessment of the Affordable Care Act is less certain. The assimilation of "the lasting and good in liberalism and in the New Deal"<sup>6</sup> might lead to the conclusion that Viereck would have approved of national health care. However, the "moral duty of compassion" was not *carte blanche*. Viereck explained the line of demarcation as follows:

A more substantial objection does arise when the proposed reforms cross a line beyond which welfare laws are inflated into the welfare superstate. Let

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4. Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 73.

5. *Ibid.*, 75.

6. *Ibid.*, 75.

us name this line the Statist Line. It is the line of diminishing returns for humanitarianism. Beyond it, the increase in security is less than the loss in liberty.<sup>7</sup>

Any extrapolation of Viereck's humanistic conservatism to contemporary social reforms is subject to a caveat. Viereck's humanism is inextricably connected to his emphasis on community and concern with social order. As in the case of Franklin Roosevelt, the critic must ask "To what extent is his support of social reform attributable to compassion, and to what extent to deflection of radical philosophy and avoidance of social disorder?"<sup>8</sup>

Viereck certainly would not view the appearance of either the "Tea Party" or "Occupy Wall Street" as a positive development. "*Vox populi*, warned the Tory Coleridge in 1832, may turn out to be not *vox dei* but *vox diaboli*."<sup>9</sup> He describes populism in clearly anti-Burkean terms. "From Tom Paine through Jackson, Weaver, Bryan, La Follette, the American Populist tradition has rested squarely on faith in the natural goodness of man, the

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7. Ibid., 75.

8. Compassion and efficacy are not inherently incompatible.

9. Viereck, *Unadjusted Man*, 129.

infinite perfectibility of the masses."<sup>10</sup> Neo-populists fared no better with Viereck. He wrote:

The Populists were openly egalitarian radicals against America's unwritten hierarchy. The neo-Populists, while emotionally being just as radical against that same hierarchy are 200% radical-baiters on the verbal level. They even get themselves called "conservative" by the popular press!<sup>11</sup>

Viereck saw direct democracy as a threat to liberty. The greater the degree of direct democracy, the greater is the opportunity for demagoguery. In a constitutional government the classical danger of dictatorship is no longer a factor. Nonetheless Viereck queried:

... [T]hen why is it a serious threat to liberty today? Because the hundredfold increase in the mechanized media for mass communications has put salesmanship, whether of soap or of politics, on the lowest common denominator, at the cost of everything individual, exceptional, and nobly aloof. Direct democracy now has an audience larger and more responsive to hysteria than ever before in history.<sup>12</sup>

Viereck observed that direct democracy is "also the enemy of humaneness." He cited both the censure of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court

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10. Ibid., 208.

11. Ibid., 195.

12. Ibid., 138.

in *Brown v. Board of Education*<sup>13</sup> and the ensuing desegregation mandates by state supreme courts in Florida and Texas. "Neither triumph of liberty would have been won in a direct democracy, a government settling issues only be majority vote."<sup>14</sup>

The more fundamental problem for Viereck would be freedom in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America. Freedom is individuality. By the mid-1950s he perceived that technology was the driving force behind societal change, and that the conformity emanating from a utilitarian technical society was a threat to both artistic and political creativity, which he believed to be conjoined. In 2003 he wrote:

There is something awry when 230 million Americans, with the highest living standard in history, create less drama, lyrics, and paintings than some 100,000 Athenians (or Florentines, or Elizabethans).... Could it be because 230 million Americans are (with exceptions) mostly masses while the 100,000 were (with exceptions) mostly individuals?<sup>15</sup>

The significance of this deficit lies in the synthesis of art and the political. "In a free democracy, the needed

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13. 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

14. Viereck, *Unadjusted Man*, 146.

15. *Ibid.*

aristocracy is that of creative loneliness, the artistically creative scars of the inner imagination against the outer mechanization - the fight for the private life."<sup>16</sup> What is the private life? Viereck wrote:

Three of the differing modes of creativity -- religious, aesthetic, intellectual -- have this in common: they are what an individual does in his loneliness. In an impersonal machine-age, the fight is to preserve the concrete, the intimate, the inefficiently wayward; to preserve the nonbusy, the nonuseful; to preserve the dawdling inner life, whether as the creatively alone or simply as the playfully private, the unapologetic fun of play.

On the other hand, the fight is not only for the private life but also for the publicly-embattled right to have a private life. All mechanized societies are overadjusted, but not equally so; therefore the right to the private life has the corresponding duty partly to forego itself, in its own partly free society, in order better to preserve itself against the total tyranny next door.<sup>17</sup>

A decade after Viereck's death, it can hardly be said that American society, and its political process, have encouraged "creative loneliness."

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16. Viereck, *Metapolitics*, xxxvi.

17. Peter Viereck, *Inner Liberty: The Stubborn Grit in the Machine* (Lebanon, Pa.; Sowers Printing Company, 1957), 8 (originally given as a lecture at Kenyon College, April, 1957, at a conference on "The Essentials of Freedom").

In contrast to his advocacy of traditional values and community, Viereck disparaged "political correctness."<sup>18</sup> He was an indefatigable defender of freedom of thought, and a critic of political "thought-control" whether promoted in Stalinist Russia or by the Buckley-Goldwater New Right. Viereck's advocacy for academic freedom dated back to his criticism of Buckley's *God and Man at Yale*. "Never punish a man for his ideas, no matter how fatheaded. They are his own business. Even if communist ideas. The Bill of Rights gives him that right."<sup>19</sup> The current practice of American universities of "disinvitation" of prominent speakers whose ideas may be "politically incorrect" or intellectually offensive, or even simply at variance with students' conventional wisdom, is totally at odds with Viereck's intellectual legacy. "Academic freedom is as fragile as it is indispensable."<sup>20</sup>

Was Viereck's conservative philosophy, based on Judeo-Christian values and rejection of moral relativism,

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18. Viereck, *Metapolitics*, xxxvii; *Unadjusted Man*, xiv.

19. Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, 298. Viereck continued "But the law is entitled to punish a man for his acts." He deemed *membership* in the Communist Party to be an act.

20. *Ibid.*, 294.

even while repudiating dogmatism, nonetheless an intellectual precursor of the Christian Right and radical social-conservative movements of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries? Does Viereck's idea of cultural conservatism address unanticipated contemporary moral issues such as abortion and gay marriage?

It is problematic to superimpose Viereck's ideas onto 21<sup>st</sup> Century American social issues derived from a constitutional right of privacy.<sup>21</sup> The right of privacy is different from the private life. Viereck wrote extensively of the latter, but not of the former. He did criticize the Religious Right in 2003. He wrote:

A sense of proportion and a sense of humor exclude from "spiritual" any right wing lobby of politicized misuse of religion. Their golden rule has become the gilded rule. The point is for our opinion makers to embody values, not soap-box them; to live values that cannot be reduced to sound-bites.<sup>22</sup>

Revisiting Winston Churchill's comparison in 1903 of his Conservative party "'with its religious convictions and constitutional principles'" with the Republican Party in

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21. *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965).

22. Viereck, *Metapolitics*, xxxvi.

the United States, Viereck wrote in 2004, "Well, the 'religious convictions' remain, not as in Lincoln, but as hypocritical homage to the fundamentalist media (Roberts, Falwell, Bob Jones University)." <sup>23</sup>

Freedom of thought and expression was the one sphere in which Viereck exhibited some tolerance of radicalism. "At times it is the zealots who get needed humane reforms done." <sup>24</sup> Viereck was an opponent of absolutism, but even more so of relativism. "I am not scared to use the words good and bad. Sometimes in history an issue can become a litmus-paper test, dividing the bad from the good." <sup>25</sup> While his views on the "social issues" that have become part of, and at times dominated, the political process in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America can only be the subject of conjecture, his arrival at a position would presumably be consistent with his approach to all questions. Viereck wrote:

What inspires anti-bourgeois outrage in bourgeois France is either aesthetics or economics. Among bourgeois Anglo-Saxons it is sexual outrage

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23. Viereck, *Unadjusted Man*, xvi-xvii.

24. *Ibid.*, xv.

25. Viereck, *Unadjusted Man*, xvii. Viereck was referring specifically to McCarthyism.

that triggers a moralizing crusade: Byron, Wilde, Clinton, obscene modern art. All these militant outrages share one emotion, self-righteousness. Righteousness, okay. But self-righteous crusades are always in the wrong. Especially when they're in the right.<sup>26</sup>

Self-righteousness, the "soap-boxing" of values, sound-bites, the absolutism of Buckley and most litmus tests are inadequate means to determine a result for Viereck. A dispassionate analysis reflecting both traditional values and a Burkean capacity for change justifies any result. That is the relevance of Viereck's thought to social issues in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America.

### **Internationalism**

In the realm of foreign affairs this century has been dominated by international terrorism and by American intervention in the Middle East. There can be little doubt that foreign policy has been initially driven, and subsequently framed, by neo-conservatism. The principal architects of the response to terrorism and interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to Vice President Richard Cheney, were Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and

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26. Ibid., xiv.

John Bolton, each the product of neo-conservative academics or affiliated with neo-conservative organizations.

George Nash describes "neo-conservatism" as a movement that began in the early 1970s and resembled the new conservatism. Nash writes:

Intellectually, the neo-conservative themes are the central themes of our time. The collapse of values. The place of tradition in a time of change. The need not only for outward material progress but for the inner satisfaction of living in what seems to be a proper society. The place for an intellectual elite.<sup>27</sup>

Nash refers to this movement as "right-wing liberalism" and an "odyssey of the 'mild conservative,'" which attracted disillusioned 1960s liberals appalled at the student unrest, the rise of the New Left and the ascendancy in the Democratic Party of the followers of

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27. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 528, quoting Robert Bartley, "Irving Kristol and *The Public Interest Crowd*," *Alternative*, June-September 1972, 5-6.

It could be argued that neo-conservatism paradoxically may include a brand of "neo-liberalism." While neo-conservatism is frequently identified with interventionism, perhaps with benign intentions, one byproduct frequently is international *laissez faire* economics, in the form of outsourcing of production and promotion of the interests of multinational corporations with inadequate, or sometimes feigned, concern for labor conditions and human rights. This would run counter to the higher motivation ascribed by Nash in a domestic context.

George McGovern.<sup>28</sup> Nash provides no explanation concerning the origin of neo-conservative foreign policy analogous to his attribution of domestic policy to the social upheaval in the 1960s and early 1970s. Neo-conservative foreign policy first appears in the administration of President George W. Bush. Nash writes:

Even more than its sometimes heterodox domestic policies, the Bush administration's approach to foreign affairs -- especially in Iraq -- placed new strains on the conservative coalition.<sup>29</sup> The President's audacious exertion of executive power in the war on terrorism rattled libertarians and traditionalists for whom the restraint of executive power was a settled first principle. His sweeping invocation of the language of "hard Wilsonianism" seemed to some on the right to be profoundly unconservative, although (unlike Woodrow Wilson) Bush was not an ardent supranationalist: a fact that helped to draw conservative patriots to his colors.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly, the President's vigorous democratic universalism, and the prominence of neoconservatives in his foreign and defense policy apparatus, helped

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28. Ibid., 524-531, 55-557.

29. Nash has added neo-conservatives and the Religious Right to the original "coalition" of libertarians, new conservatives (now labeled "traditionalists"), and anti-communists (now dubbed as "national security hardliners"). Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 578.

30. The appointment of John Bolton as United States Ambassador to the United Nations would certainly have had this effect.

to trigger still more skirmishes in the quarrel between neocons and paleocons.<sup>31</sup>

Claes Ryn also notes the ambiguous nature of neo-conservatism. He writes:

..., it was unclear why the neoconservatives were called conservative. They were different from many American progressive liberals in that they were critical of some programs of the welfare state and favored a hawkish and interventionist foreign policy, especially in the Middle East. But they were, on the whole, comfortable with liberal modernity and its roots in Enlightenment rationality and opposition to the Christian tradition. They were favorable to liberal interventionism, democracy, equal opportunity, human rights, and a federal safety net. They had modified their attachment to statism and became favorable to capitalism, but even after these "second thoughts" they had little or no patience for talk of aristocracy, hierarchy, prescription, traditional communities, or a renewal of Christianity.<sup>32</sup>

In the context of international affairs neo-conservatism embodies an idea very different from the new conservatism.<sup>33</sup>

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31. Nash, *Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 579-980. Paleoconservatism is a concept even more elusive than neo-conservatism.

32. Ryn, Foreword to *Aesthetic Origins*, xvii.

33. Like so many political labels, "neo-conservatism" is difficult to define. "Neo-" generally connotes a revival, while neo-conservatism is more of a fusion of a variation of the Burkean socioeconomic and cultural principles with a very nationalistic and idealistic foreign policy. Bogus defines neo-conservatives as practitioners of *realpolitik*. Bogus, *Buckley*, 20-21; see n. 27, supra. The joinder of idealism and *realpolitik* in one policy is an

Neo-conservative foreign policy is based on the concept of power, the necessity of its use, and the principle that idealism can generate politically practical results. The exercise of power is the means to achieve the idealistic goal. This application of the concept to American foreign policy is a syllogism. The development of democratic regimes abroad is in the interest of the United States [i.e., the end]. Military power should be employed to advance the interests of the United States [i.e., the means]. Therefore, American military power should be employed to promote democratic regimes [i.e., the end justifies the means].<sup>34</sup> At its core is a strident, messianic nationalism reflecting "American exceptionalism."

Viereck considered nationalism to be the culture from which thought-control and totalitarianism emanate. He adhered to the conservative tradition of internationalism.

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application of the axiom that "the end justifies the means." Whether an "end" reflects idealism is a matter of judgment.

34. This is a simplification that fails to account for the diversity of judgments as what may constitute the national interest in various situations, and in the specific instance of intervention in Iraq, and for unintended consequences. That discussion is beyond the scope of this study.

That tradition has not been entirely consistent. In *Conservative Thinkers* Viereck traced the erratic conservative history regarding nationalism and internationalism.

Conservatism originally was internationalist. "Pride in nationality was essential from the start to many conservative philosophers, notably Burke. But it was essential among other ancestral traditions, not as the only one."<sup>35</sup> Viereck's thesis on the interrelationship between conservatism and Christian values applies here. "The Christian religion itself, so basic to conservatives, is by definition internationalist."<sup>36</sup>

Nationalism became a tool with which to manipulate the political culture. Between 1815 and 1848 nationalism, initially a middle-class intellectual liberal movement against the French internationalists and "conservative aristocratic cosmopolitanism," spread to the masses and was employed by insurgents to "disrupt the domestic *status quo*" in order to advance social change. Achievement of

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35. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 22.

36. *Ibid.*, 23.

national unity and establishment of conservative monarchies in Italy in 1861 and Germany in 1871 associated nationalism with conservatism, and created an alliance between conservatives and the middle class. Marxism thus became an internationalist movement of workers and intellectuals. From 1870 to 1914 nationalism was a means by which governments sought to maintain the *status quo* and avert democratic social change. After World War I, that became an unmanageable task in Germany and Italy.<sup>37</sup> After World War II conservatives returned to internationalism as a response to Soviet aggression. Viereck writes, however, "But such short-run material expediency may not entirely explain the return of conservatives in the 1950's to their original internationalist roots. There may also be a long-run ethical explanation: Christianity."<sup>38</sup>

Viereck rejected "American exceptionalism" as a basis for foreign policy. In 1953 Viereck wrote:

The American chore does not mean forcing our values down the throats of the rest of the world.

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37. Ibid., 22-24.

38. Ibid., 24. Viereck does not elaborate. It may be inferred that Viereck is alluding to the beneficence associated with Christianity.

Nor does it mean giving up our own values for the sake of new ones. It means stressing deliberately those values that we and the rest of the West have in common and minimizing those on which we differ.<sup>39</sup>

Also in the tradition of Babbitt, Viereck, a veteran of World War II, wrote, "In fighting what we rightly or wrongly believe to be evil, force must be only the reluctant last resort after all other alternatives are exhausted."<sup>40</sup>

Viereck, however, was not oblivious to pursuit of the national interest. Addressing the Iranian nationalization of British oil rights in 1951 and the Egyptian assertion of rights in the Suez Canal in the 1950s, he wrote, "Resources like Iranian oil and the Suez Canal will simply have to be put out of the reach of local blackmailers and local suiciders and placed by U.N. under a democratic international committee for the good of all."<sup>41</sup>

Viereck's staunch anti-totalitarian strain must also be taken into account. Totalitarianism embodies the

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39. Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, 92.

40. Ibid., 136. However, restraint must be distinguished from appeasement. "How distinguish these alternatives? Where draw the line?" For Viereck, the answer lies in a synthesis of "mature judgment, plus the needed stimulus of righteous indignation, plus the needed counterstimulus of compassionate forgiveness." Ibid.

41. Ibid., 239.

nationalistic depreciation of the individual and the denial of free expression that Viereck deplored. Viereck was fully familiar with Nazi and communist totalitarianism. He recognized that military force was required to constrain Nazi Germany, its brutal oppression and actualized unbounded imperialism. His anti-communism was a confluence of sympathy for oppressed populations within the Soviet bloc, anticipation of unrestrained Soviet aggression, and opposition to the economic premises of communism.

Viereck's pronouncements on an appropriate response to the Soviet Union provide some guidance. He opposed containment in the form of maintenance of the status quo, but favored political opposition to the Soviet Union rather than a militarily enforced roll-back. In a 1965 retrospective he ascribed to President Harry Truman's policy "the overriding virtue of standing midway between the Henry Wallace appeasement and MacArthur-Goldwater atom-rattling" and observed that "This still seems the way to keep peace while at the same time rolling back

Communism without war (as could have and should have been done in Hungary in 1956)."<sup>42</sup> Looking ahead, he wrote:

Those who favor liberation rather than passive containment in the Balkans and Central Europe are sometimes accused as being as warlike as the Goldwater atom-rattlers. Such can be the case but need not be the case. All depends on how the theory of liberation is worked out concretely. The solution advocated in these pages would reject a foreign-imposed forcible liberation from without but would work for gradual liberation from within, along the line of each country's local traditions and Burkean roots.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, in light of "post-Stalinist improvements" in Russia and Eastern Europe by 1965, he also wrote, somewhat paradoxically:

There we are witnessing the end of that total Stalinism with which coexistence was impossible and immoral. We are witnessing the partly-reformed, polycentrist communism, with which a cautious keep-your-powder-dry coexistence is not only possible but (in an entirely new atomic context) indispensable.<sup>44</sup>

Viereck's reappraisal was a reflection of a more subtle Soviet internationalism and a recognition of increased

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42. Ibid., 327-328.

43. Ibid., 328.

44. Ibid., xiv.

humanism and extension of the rule of law, however limited.<sup>45</sup>

The events of September 11, 2001, the incursion into Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq occurred before Viereck's death in 2006. Tom Reiss had a conversation with Viereck on January 30, 2005, the day of the Iraqi elections. Reiss recounted:

"Where are the roots?" he said when I asked him what he thought of the elections. "How can you have a democracy without roots" England had the roots. Switzerland had the roots. Holland had the roots. My hunch is that Iraq has no deep roots, and therefore the best thing you can hope for is inefficient corruption. Some kind of moderate thug ruler, instead of a mass-murdering thug like Saddam. I don't think in practice more could happen. I think it would take more than a couple of generations"<sup>46</sup>

The necessity of "roots" as the prerequisite for democracy echoes both the observation by Alexis de Tocqueville that "habits of the heart" are indispensable to the maintenance of American democracy<sup>47</sup> and the theory of Louis Hartz that the uniqueness of American democratic capitalism is

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45. Ibid., xix.

46. Reiss, *supra*.

47. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley, trans. Henry Reeve, rev. Francis Bowen, 2 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 1:299.

attributable to the lack of a feudal heritage,<sup>48</sup> and was expressed in writing by Viereck fifty years earlier.<sup>49</sup>

Viereck's opinion on the interventions can only be a matter of speculation.<sup>50</sup> However, the rationale of neo-conservative foreign policy is analogous to an *a priori* principle and the prevalence of rationalism over experience. The end, displacement of an autocrat and installation of a democratic regime, is inconsistent with Edmund Burke's opposition to military adventurism and belief that "a project which ultimately seeks to abolish national identities and allegiances is likely to fail."<sup>51</sup>

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48. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955).

49. Viereck, *Conservative Thinkers*, 70.

50. Reiss, *supra*. Reiss does not report directly any assessment by Viereck of the American intervention. However, Reiss also had a conversation with Buckley later in 2005. Reiss reported:

. . . I asked Buckley how he felt about conservatism's current course. "I'm not happy with it," he said. "It's probably true out there" -- in the support for the war in Iraq -- "you have a rediscovery of idealism. But if one acknowledged the second inaugural address of the President as marching orders, well, that would keep us busy with something to do for all eternity. It's not, in my judgment, conservatism. Because conservatism is, to a considerable extent, the acknowledgement of realities. And this is surreal."

Viereck might have put it the same way.

51. Norman, *Burke*, 286.

The means, military force and occupation, are contraventions of Irving Babbitt's concept of the just state and his antipathy to idealism and imperialism.<sup>52</sup>

The invasion of Iraq was essentially an externally-driven revolution comparable in societal consequence to the French Revolution.

Where was Saddam's Iraq, with its oppressed population and expansionist adventure in Kuwait, located on the spectrum? Speculation that Peter Viereck would have opposed the invasion of Iraq, had he spoken out, is sound.

An application of Viereck's premises to the incursion into Afghanistan is more complex. The incursion was a response to an act of extreme violence within the United States on September 11, 2001, planned and executed by foreign nationals. Under international law such an act, if done by a sovereign power, would be an act of war. The applicability of legal principles to the act is obfuscated by the modern phenomenon of acts of war perpetrated by

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52. Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership*, 177-178, 311-315, 334-335.

associations rather than sovereign entities. Furthermore, the objective of the incursion was not regime change since Afghanistan lacked an effective central government, although it could be argued that the dissipation of the influence of the Taliban was integral to the pursuit of Al Qaeda and was *de facto* regime change. The incursion, to the extent that it was a military action against Al Qaeda, would appear to satisfy Viereck's "last resort" criteria of judgment, indignation and compassion.

A more complex question is how Viereck's principles apply to the ascendancy of Middle Eastern theocracies and the twenty-first century phenomenon of terrorism.

In the Introduction to the 2003 edition of *Metapolitics* Viereck compared Arab nationalism and German romantic nationalism that gave rise to the Third Reich. Viereck wrote:

One major source (one among many) for Arab nationalists is their study of German, especially Fichte (1767-1814) and Herder (1744-1803), by founders of the Baathe parties (Iraq, Syria) and of Arab anti-Westernism.

. . .  
Early Arab xenophobes like Wahhab (1703-1791), founder of Saudi Wahhabism, based their hate on religion not race. Mohammad and the Koran criticized other religions but were not racists. Current Arab

racism and lawless terror are not traditional Islam but a recent import from Germany. A minority. But isn't history made by intense minorities?<sup>53</sup>

Viereck's vision of the future reflected his belief in the limitations of conflict resolution through political means. Viereck added:

[I]t took over a century for the racist and Volk fever to burn out in Germany. Not after liberal Wilsonian sermons but after defeat in two wars. Will such terrifying measures be needed against the Middle East terror? I wouldn't bet on sweet reasonableness. As in Germany, the Arab terrorists have some legitimate grievances which should be met. But do grievances justify terror and mass murder of the innocent?

Third World anti-Westernism is Western, being partly traceable to Asian students of Marx in London and Arab students of Volk in Berlin.<sup>54</sup>

His prediction of a conclusion reflects his faith in the power of ideas. "The jihad terrorists, though strong at bombing, are weak and anachronistic as an idea. Hence they can be, and will be physically defeated."<sup>55</sup>

Viereck's convictions regarding communism and the appropriate American courses of action in the 1950s and 1960s provide markers to the formulation of a response to

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53. Viereck, *Metapolitics*, xxii-xxiii.

54. *Ibid.*, xxiv.

55. *Ibid.*, xxxv.

theocratic regimes and terrorism, including Iran, the Taliban and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, in the twenty-first century.<sup>56</sup> While a theocratic economic philosophy analogous to that of communism is not directly germane, the potential impact of the theocracies on the global energy market and the implications of economic sanctions may be a corresponding consideration. More significantly, the oppressed populations, expansionism and thought-control that characterize these regimes and movements are directly in opposition to Viereck's values. In 1965 he wrote:

An effective foreign policy for peace makes clear to the Communist world that we are always ready for a peaceful settlement of all problems but will not flinch from fighting in self-defense against aggression.<sup>57</sup>

An inference that Viereck favored, and would favor, liberation is certainly reasonable. The question of military intervention would probably depend on whether he would perceive these theocracies as equivalencies to Nazi

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56. Viereck's commentary on terrorism refers exclusively to Arabs. Although Al-Quada and ISIS are, or initially were, predominantly Arab, the non-Arab Iranians and Afghani Taliban are equally relevant in a discussion of the "war on terror."

57. Viereck, *Shame and Glory of the Intellectuals*, 328.

Germany or "merely" neo-Stalinist. While the possibility of coexistence with Iran is a matter of debate in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and particularly in 2015, and an attempt to achieve a negotiated settlement with the Taliban in Afghanistan is underway, Viereck's principles are clearly consistent with military engagement with Al Qaeda and ISIS.

Yet, in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America the military and sociological aspects of war have become inextricably intertwined. This phenomenon became apparent in Vietnam where America failed to distinguish between imperialistic and nationalistic communism. Does Viereck's approach to communism in the Soviet Union, Central Europe and the Balkans have any relevance to a conflict between the United States and a theocracy in the Middle East or the Lower Continent? Is an anti-theocratic military endeavor consistent with Edmund Burke's belief that "a project which ultimately seeks to abolish national identities and allegiances is likely to fail"?<sup>58</sup>

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58. Norman, Burke, 286.

## CONCLUSION

Why did Buckley prevail? Buckley had charm, zeal, and adaptability in a perfect political environment created by external events. "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."<sup>1</sup> Buckley was lucky. Viereck was not.

Why did Viereck withdraw from the political realm? Claes Ryn writes "One may hypothesize that one of the reasons why Viereck turned increasingly from prose to poetry was a sense that the conservatism he had promoted in his prose writings seemed not to be gaining much tractions."<sup>2</sup> However, Viereck's decision reflects his long-standing perception of the relationship between literature and the political. In 1951, in discussing his assessment of *God and Man at Yale*, Viereck wrote:

Buckley, the capitalists, and the Marxists would reply to this [analysis]: I'm just a poet who should keep his nose out of politics and economics anyway. They are right -- in so far as my first love is

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1. Attributed to Seneca (4 B.C.-65 A.D.)

2. Ryn, Foreword in *Aesthetic Origins*, xvi.

poetry and at first approach the esthetic-ethical-creative, not the political.<sup>3</sup>

In 1953, in a review of Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*,

Viereck wrote:

Unlike the mature and Churchillian and non-huckerish Conservative Party of Great Britain, no mature and responsible kind of conservative party exists in America. The chief British conservatives treated by Kirk are political leaders (Burke, Disraeli); the chief American conservatives are nonpolitical literary figures (Irving Babbitt, Santayana, Paul Elmer More). This disparity suggests that not politics, but education, religion, philosophy, literature and the humanities are the proper sphere for the new conservative rebirth in America today. The same was once true of British conservatism, which likewise received its philosophical formulation from literary critics like the poet Coleridge before osmosing (via Disraeli) into politics. Perhaps the same osmosing will take place in politics in the future; in the present it is difficult to see any American party capable of responsible, ethical conservatism so long as it condones the irresponsible wild men of its lunatic fringe.<sup>4</sup>

A decade later, after the ascendancy of Buckley and with the advent of Goldwater, Viereck reiterated:

The best-rooted philosophical conservatives in America derive from the anti-material-progress tradition of Melville and Irving Babbitt; they are

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3. Peter Viereck to Henry Regnery, November 8, 1951, Viereck Papers.

4. Peter Viereck, review of *The Conservative Mind* by Russell Kirk, *Saturday Evening Review*, October 3, 1953, 39.

found mainly in the literary and educational world, the creative world at its best, the non-political world.<sup>5</sup>

Bogus is incorrect in asserting that Viereck "retreated."<sup>6</sup> Viereck turned to the medium he had always believed offered the greatest potential for success, and returned to his roots, to the literary and educational world in South Hadley.

There may be some irony in this assertion by Bogus that Viereck "retreated."

After the "boarding party," Buckley, the anti-establishment firebrand, may have become a victim of his own success. Historian Alan Brinkley wrote that Judis raised two questions about Buckley in his biography:

Why did the privileged, aristocratic son of a wealthy businessman choose a career, and an intellectual outlook, so out of keeping with the norms of his class? And how, having established himself in the 1950s as the scourge of the establishment, did he reach so comfortably, and apparently so effortlessly, an accommodation with it 20 years later?<sup>7</sup>

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5. Ibid., 146.

6. Bogus, *Buckley*, 138-139.

7. Alan Brinkley, "The Conservative at Sea," *New Republic*, May 30, 1988, 28.

Buckley's syndicated column and *Firing Line* made him a celebrity. "Yet Buckley's influence was more remarkable for its range than its depth. He spoke and wrote constantly, but he often had little of substance to say."<sup>8</sup> Brinkley asserts that Buckley was frustrated by his "marginality," and sought a wider audience. Politically, he was increasingly drawn to the pragmatic and centrist world of the electoral process. "One by one, Buckley broke ranks with his old allies at *National Review*. He began to fraternize instead with leading figures of the Eastern Establishment ...."<sup>9</sup> Perhaps it was Buckley, rather than Viereck, who retreated.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Ibid., 29.

9. Ibid., 30. There was another sense in which Buckley's primacy was undermined by his own success, and, perhaps, by the ideological identity and personal characteristics that had enabled his rise.

For as conservatism gathered strength in the 1970s and '80s, Buckley, once its undisputed intellectual leader -- began to lose his ascendancy. New conservative writers were now competing for attention .... There was, beginning in 1981, a conservative administration that in theory served as vindication of Buckley's long crusade, but that in practice (his personal friendship with the President notwithstanding) carefully and at times humiliatingly excluded him from its councils. Ibid., 31.

That administration was far more populist than elitist. Reagan appeared far more "folksy" than urbane.

10. This self-recasting by Buckley began in 1963, in the same timeframe that he experienced the inability to complete his *Revolt*

Or perhaps, all political actors, whether philosopher or activist, whether victor or vanquished at a given point in time, have only a certain time and a specific place, and inevitably are overtaken by events.

Why has the "First Conservative" been relegated to relative obscurity? There is no single reason. First, Viereck was, first and foremost, in his own mind a poet and a humanist. There is little indication that Viereck ever aspired to fame as a political theorist. Russell Kirk did have such aspirations. Second, Viereck's persona would not permit him to make the accommodations that fame frequently requires. Russell Kirk was not reluctant to make those accommodations. Third, Buckley was a master of public relations and fully intended to relegate Viereck to obscurity while promoting Russell Kirk, not out of spite or rancor, but because it was essential to the success of Buckley's agenda. Finally, Viereck may simply have been in the wrong intellectual "place" at the wrong time.

By the late 1970s, despite the initial hostility that Buckley felt toward Viereck, and in contrast to the

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*Against the Masses* and the recognition of his internal intellectual contradictions.

unrelenting enmity that Viereck expressed toward Russell Kirk, the personal relationship between Viereck and Buckley appeared to be cordial.

By 1978 Buckley had turned to writing fiction. In a note on recent books, Viereck commented on Buckley's latest novel in a much different tone than that of his review of *God and Man at Yale*. Viereck wrote:

*Stained Glass*, by William F. Buckley, Jr. I still can't see why economic Manchester liberalism (rootless, materialistic, atomizing) should ever be deemed "conservative" (which means a rooted, organic continuity) by Mr. Buckley, but it's his novel I'm here to praise; I find it intelligent, well written and a "good read." Even better it raises unanswerable moral questions of ends and means. So read it to ponder as well as enjoy.<sup>11</sup>

When Viereck submitted a poem to *National Review* for publication, Buckley wrote Viereck:

What a pleasure it was to see you again after so many years. I have read your poem and am delighted by it and we shall certainly publish it. I enclose the current issue of NR just to give you an idea of it in case you are a little behind.

With warm personal regards,  
Bill<sup>12</sup>

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11. Peter Viereck, review of *Stained Glass* by William F. Buckley, Jr., *American Spectator*, December, 1978, 19.

12. William F. Buckley, Jr. to Peter Viereck, May 5, 1980. Viereck Papers.

Apparently, Buckley was overruled by the editorial staff, or had second thoughts. Buckley subsequently wrote:

I return, regretfully your poem. Our problem is as you guessed: a conscious decision not to publish that serious verse. We did, for three or four years, under the editorship of Hugh Kenner, but it proved to be unmanageable. There is something arhythmic in the journalistic problem which I've never quite been able to understand. How are you my friend?

As always,  
Bill<sup>13</sup>

Of course, Buckley could afford to be gracious to his "friend," Viereck. Ronald Reagan was in the White House.

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13. William F. Buckley, Jr. to Peter Viereck, February 11, 1981. Viereck Papers.

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