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Ideology and Civility: On the Politics of the Intellectual

The Opium of the Intellectuals by Raymond Aron; The Pursuit of the Millennium by Norman Cohn

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# ARTS AND LETTERS

## IDEOLOGY AND CIVILITY: ON THE POLITICS OF THE INTELLECTUAL<sup>1</sup>

By EDWARD SHILS

An ideological outlook encircled and invaded public life in the Western countries during the 19th century, and in the 20th century it threatened to achieve universal dominion. The intellectual classes which concerned themselves with politics were particularly affected. The intensity of the attack has varied from country to country. It has been least severe in the United States and Great Britain; in France, Germany, Italy, and Russia, it possessed an overwhelming power. Wherever it became sufficiently strong, it paralyzed the free dialectic of intellectual life, introducing standards irrelevant to discovery and creation, and in politics it constricted or broke the flexible consensus necessary for a free and spontaneous order. It appeared in a variety of manifestations, each alleging itself to be unique. Italian Fascism, German National Socialism, Russian Bolshevism, French and Italian Communism, the *Action Française*, the British Union of Fascists—and their fledgling American kinsman, “McCarthyism,” which died in infancy—have all, however, been members of the same family. They have all sought to conduct politics on an ideological plane.

What are the articles of faith of ideological politics? First and above all, the assumption that politics should be conducted from the standpoint of a coherent, comprehensive set of beliefs which must override every other consideration. These beliefs attribute supreme significance to one group or class—the nation, the ethnic folk, the proletariat—and the leader and the party as the true representative of these residences of all virtue, and they correspondingly view as the seat and source of all evil a foreign power, an ethnic group like the Jews, or the bourgeois class. Ideological politics have not been merely the politics of a dualistic faith which confines itself to the political sphere. The centrality of this belief has required that it radiate into every sphere of

<sup>1</sup>*The Opium of the Intellectuals*. By Raymond Aron. Doubleday, Doran, and Co. 1957. \$4.50. *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. By Norman Cohn. Essential Books. 1957. \$9.00.

life—that it replace religion, that it provide aesthetic criteria, that it rule over scientific research and philosophic thought, that it regulate sexual and family life.

It has been the belief of those who practice politics ideologically that they alone have the truth about the right ordering of life—of life as a whole, and not just of political life. From this has followed a deep distrust of the traditional institutions—family, church, economic organizations, and schools—and the institutional system through which politics have been conventionally carried on in modern society. Ideological politics have required, therefore, a distrust of politicians<sup>9</sup> and of the system of parties through which they work. Insofar as ideological politics have been carried on by organizations calling themselves political parties, it has only been because that term has become conventional for organizations actively concerned with politics. It has not signified that their proponents were ready to participate constitutionally in the political system. Extra-constitutionality has been inherent in their conceptions and aspirations, even when their procedures have seemed to lie within the constitution—and by constitution, we mean not just the written constitution, laws, and judicial decisions, but the moral presuppositions of these. Ideological politics have taken up a platform outside the “system.” In their agitation, ideological politicians have sought to withdraw the loyalty of the population from the “system” and to destroy it, replacing it by a new order. This new order would have none of the evils which make up the existing system; the new order would be fully infused with the ideological belief which alone can provide salvation.

Ideological politics are alienative politics. They are the politics of those who shun the central institutional system of the prevailing so-

<sup>9</sup>The hostile attitude towards politicians, towards the “parliamentary talking shop,” with its unprincipled compromise of interests, and the petty quality of personnel of civil politics is a continuing theme of the ideologist. Hitler said that politicians were “people whose only real principle was unprincipledness, coupled with an insolent and pushing officiousness and shamelessly developed mendacity” (*Mein Kampf*, München, 1941 [583rd-587th ed.] p. 72). “Parliament itself is given up to talk for the special purpose of fooling the ‘common people’” (Lenin, *State and Revolution*, in *Towards the Seizure of Power*, Book II [*Collected Works*, Vol. XXI], New York, 1932, p. 186). At the other pole of intellectual sophistication, Mr. Edmund Wilson, during his own ideological phase, once wrote, “Our society has . . . produced in its specialized professional politicians one of the most obnoxious groups which has ever disgraced human history—a group that seems unique in having managed to be corrupt, uncultivated, and incompetent all at once” (*New Republic*, January 14, 1931, reprinted in *The Shores of Light*, London, 1952, p. 529). The anti-political literature of the ideological intellectual is vast: Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton, *The Party System*, London, 1911, is representative.

ciety. Ideological politicians feel no affinity with such institutions, and they participate in them for purposes very different from those who have preceded them in the conduct of these institutions.<sup>3</sup>

For the ideological politician, membership in a parliamentary body or the acceptance of office involves only an opportunity to overthrow and destroy the system rather than to work within it and improve it.<sup>4</sup>

Ideological politics are the politics of "friend-foe," "we-they," "who-whom."<sup>5</sup> Those who are not on the side of the ideological politician are, according to the ideologist, against him.

Thus, moral separatism arises from the sharp, stable, and unbridgeable dualism of ideological politics which makes the most radical and uncompromising distinction between good and evil, left and right, national and unnational, American and un-American. Admixtures are intolerable, and where they exist they are denied as unreal, misleading, or unstable.<sup>7</sup>

Ideological politics have been obsessed with totality. They have been obsessed with futurity. They have believed that sound politics require a doctrine which comprehends every event in the universe, not only in space but in time. To live from year to year and to keep afloat, to solve the problems of the year and of the decade are not enough for ideological politics. Ideological politicians must see their actions in the

<sup>3</sup>Mr. Aneurin Bevan, who has within him, together with other gifts, a powerful ideological strain, has written of the radical's entry into the House of Commons: "Here he is, a tribune of the people, coming to make his voice heard in the seats of power . . . The first thing he should bear in mind is that these were not his ancestors. His ancestors had no part in the past, the accumulated dust of which now muffles his own footsteps. His forefathers were tending sheep or plowing the land, or serving the statesmen whose names he sees written on the walls around him, and whose portraits look down upon him in the long corridors . . . In him, his people are here for the first time and the history he will make will not be merely an episode in the story he is now reading. It must be wholly different, as different as the social status he now brings with him" (*In Place of Fear*, New York, 1952, p. 6).

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Leon Trotsky, *Whither England?*, New York, 1925, pp. 111-112: "We Communists are by no means disposed to advise the . . . proletariat to turn its back on Parliament . . . The question . . . is not whether it is worthwhile to use the Parliamentary method at all, but . . . is it possible to use Parliament, created by Capitalism, in the interests of its own growth and preservation, as a lever for the overthrow of capitalism."

<sup>5</sup>Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, München, Leipzig, 1932, pp. 14 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Striking evidence of the separatism of ideological politics may be found in N. Leites, *The Study of Bolshevism*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1953, pp. 291-309, 384-390, 430-442.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Aron, Ch. I, "The Myth of the Left," pp. 3-34. The deep-rootedness of the mythology of left and right among intellectuals of the Marxist tradition, and its penetration even into allegedly scientific research in sociology and social psychology are treated in my essay, "Authoritarianism 'Left' and 'Right,'" in Richard Christie and Marie Jahoda, *Studies in the "Authoritarian Personality,"* Glencoe, Illinois, 1954, pp. 24-49.

context of the totality of history. They must see themselves moving towards a culmination of history, either a new epoch, totally new in every important respect, or bringing to a glorious fulfillment a condition which has long been lost from human life. Whether totally without precedent or a renewal of the long lost, the ultimate stage will be something unique in history.<sup>8</sup> Everything else is a waiting and a preparation for that remote event.

## II

What are the grounds for thinking that the age of ideological politics is passing? How can we summon the naïveté to think such a thing, when the world is frozen into a menacing division engendered and maintained by Bolshevik ideas, when the Communist Parties of France and Italy are among the largest in their countries, when in the Middle East, in Africa and Asia passionate nationalist and ethnic ideologies continuously encroach on rational judgment and reasonable moral action.

Yet the expectation is not simply frivolously optimistic. The very heart which has sustained ideological politics among intellectuals over the past century is gradually losing its strength. Marxism is decomposing. The mythology of Bolshevik Marxism, the true nature of which was seen at first only by Bertrand Russell, Waldemar Gurian, and a handful of European Social Democrats and liberals, began its own self-deflation in the mid-1930's, at the moment of its maximum appeal to the world's intellectuals. The Moscow Trials were the first major step in the breakdown of the Communist claim that in the Soviet Union the ultimate stage of human history, the true realm of freedom, was being entered upon. The Berlin uprising of June 17, 1953 was a step further. The realm of harmony through which mankind would transcend its conflict-ridden history was unveiled as a phantasm when Russian tanks shot down German workingmen in the streets of Berlin. According to Marxism, there could only be harmony between

<sup>8</sup>The Communist Manifesto declared that in place of a class society with its classes and class antagonisms, there would be a new free society "in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." In the first edition, this was regarded by its authors as an entirely unique condition: "The history of all hitherto existing society" being "the history of class struggles." In 1888, Engels added a footnote which corrected this view, saying "all written history" was the history of class conflict. There had been a prehistorical period of communally owned property which was free of class conflict. Communism would thus be a renewal on a higher plane of what had been lost since the beginning of history. (Marx and Engels, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Erste Abt., Bd. 6, Moscow/Leningrad, 1933, pp. 525-526; p. 546.)

Socialist societies bound together by the solidarity of the proletariat, but the Soviet Union showed no compunction about suppressing the East German workers by force. The eagerness with which Hungarian and Polish intellectuals greeted their prospective emancipation from a compulsory Marxism and the Russian repression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 also contributed to the demythologizing of Marxism.

Political events alone have not discredited Marxism. Perhaps more important is its sheer unresponsiveness to the multiplicity of life itself. People still have a need to believe, but Marxism cannot satisfy it. Its formulae are too simple, and it offers nothing to those who are attempting to establish their intellectual individuality in the face of large-scale organizations and their accompanying professional specialization. The humanitarian element in Marxism—its alleged concern for the poor—can have no appeal when there are still many very poor people in Communist countries, and the poor in capitalist countries can now be seen not to be poor, not to be miserable, not to be noble—but to be as comfortable and as vulgar as, if not more vulgar than, the middle classes. Marxist utopianism has lost its power of conviction—the world is too tired and even, in this respect, too wise to be aroused by promises of a future which might be spurious and which would not be much different from the present. Journals like *Dissent* in the United States and the *Universities and Left Review* in the United Kingdom are valiant and touching efforts to save something of the ideological heritage. But they show how much ideological politics are now on the defensive, and how uncertain they are of the validity of their position. They know that their myth has faded, and that with good grounds, the intellectual spirit of the times is running against them. In every sphere of intellectual life, in economic theory, in history, and in sociology, Marxism has lost its power to attract because it is too simplistic, too threadbare intellectually and morally, and too often just wrong or irrelevant to the problems of the contemporary mind.<sup>9</sup> The emergence of the social sciences as major subjects of university research and teaching—even though they have their serious limitations and even though they sometimes bear a Marxist imprint—constitutes a major factor in the tarnishing of Marxism.

Nationalism too has lost its doctrinal grip on the intellectuals of the West. Its deeper, primordial hold is very strong, but it does not

<sup>9</sup>Even Professor Merleau-Ponty, against whose ingenious efforts to fuse existentialism and early Marxism Professor Aron directs an unsparingly detailed and devastating criticism, has lost some of his confidence in Marxism in the past few years.

reach into the plane where it could provide a principle for political judgment and action, and even less does it provide a criterion for regulating other spheres of life. In the 20th century among Western intellectuals doctrinal nationalism has never been long preponderant, although in France among the followers of Maurras and Barrès there has been a persistent and virulent minority. In Germany, it for a time suffocated reason, and in Italy under Fascism it found many willing proponents. Now, however, it is dormant. It might even be said that it is at its lowest ebb in Europe and America since the Risorgimento and the movement for the unification of the Reich. The hideous example of National Socialism, the terrible national intoxication, and the monstrous deeds committed in the name of the nation have for the time being at least exhausted the ideological passions of the German people—intellectuals and laity. The fatigue and waste of the past World Wars, and the ominous possibility of an even worse war to come add themselves to all the other elements in the constitution of the intellectual outlook to render nationalistic enthusiasm one of the least attractive of all the available alternatives of the present time.

The ideals of the European Enlightenment have quietly reasserted their validity without arousing intellectuals to passion on their behalf. It was from the ideals of bourgeois liberalism that they had turned away in the great long wave of political enthusiasm which the Russian Revolution of 1917 had raised to a flood. Now that they have come back to these ideals, they have come back soberly, circumspectly, and with moderation. They do not yet even acknowledge that they have come back to them.<sup>30</sup> The mildness of religious faith in the Western countries, no less than the relaxation of nationalist passion to an unspoken patriotism, and the desire that national sovereignty should give ground to effective control of nuclear weapons seem to provide plausible grounds for an affirmative answer to the question as to whether we are at the end of the ideological age.

Moreover, the asperities of the debate between socialism and capitalism seem to be fading. The achievements of the American and Western European economies since the war, together with the political equivocality of centrally planned economies, the failures of economic planning in the Soviet satellite states, the re-introduction of the

<sup>30</sup>Indeed, in the counterattack on ideological politics, recent writers like Professor J. L. Talmon (*The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, London, 1952) have not spared the French writers of the 18th century in their effort to trace totalitarianism to its most remote origins and to extirpate it. This view is not, however, shared by Professor Aron, *op. cit.*, p. 35.



principles of the market economy into their economies by some of the Communist states, and the modest and by no means glamorous achievements of nationalized industries in England and France, have cooled the fires of a century-long dispute between the proponents of socialism and the advocates of capitalism.

The more valid aspirations of the older humanitarian elements which were absorbed into Marxism have been more or less fulfilled in capitalist countries. The socialist and communist countries have neither realized their more grandiose ideals at all nor achieved their more reasonable aspirations any better than the capitalistic countries.

The Negro problem in the United States of course arouses passions, but no doctrines, no principles offer an apparently easy way out. The "woman question" has settled down to being a perennial headache, curable by no enunciation or espousal of clear and unambiguous principles. The ideology of egalitarianism has left the fundamental precipitate of moral egalitarianism from which it originally arose, but as a universally applicable principle it has lost its glamor. It seems almost as if what was sound in the older ideologies has been realized and what was unsound has demonstrated its unsoundness so obviously that enthusiasm can no longer be summoned.

Of course, ideological politics, Marxist, Islamic, Arabic, Hindu, Pan-African, and other, still exist in the new states outside the West in a vehement, irreconcilable form and often with great influence. But many in the West who sympathize with the desires and deplore the excesses are inclined to believe that they too will pass when the new states in which they flourish become more settled and mature. Looking back from the standpoint of a newly-achieved moderation, Western intellectuals view the ideological politics of Asia and Africa, and particularly nationalism and tribalism, as a sort of measles which afflicts a people in its childhood, but to which adults are practically immune.

There seems to be no alternative ideology for the intellectuals to turn to now, nothing to absorb all their devotion, nothing to inflame their capacity for faith and their aspirations toward perfection. The conservative revival, though genuine, is moderate. People take Burke in their stride. They have become "natural Burkeans" without making a noise about it. The *National Review*, despite its clamor, is isolated and unnoticed, and the effort to create a "conservative ideology" which would stand for more than moderation, reasonableness, and prudence has not been successful.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Irving Kristol, "Old Truths and the New Conservatism," *The Yale Review*, Spring 1958, pp. 365-373.



There seem to be no more grounds for ideological politics. Thus, it appears reasonable to think that the age of ideological politics is gradually coming to its end.

Does the present lull give us reason to believe that the tempests are now behind us and that we are now entering upon a pacific sea? An inspection of the traditions which have formed the outlook of the modern intellectual in the West and in the new countries is not entirely reassuring.

### III

One of the grounds for believing that the age of ideological politics is ending is its modernity.

Professor Aron inclines towards the view that ideological politics originated in the French Revolution.<sup>12</sup> There is much truth to this contention. Ideological politics did indeed come into the forum of public life only at the end of the 18th century in an outburst not hitherto experienced by the human race.

The reason for this relatively recent appearance of ideological politics on a grand scale is not far to seek. Until recent centuries politics were not public. In the aristocratic republics and in the ancient city democracies, politics did not engage the attention of the mass of the population. Politics were the concern of rulers and of those who aspired to become rulers. The aspiration was, however, spread over a relatively small section of the population. Tribal, feudal, and dynastic interests, which were uppermost in the political life of societies before modern times, did not nourish the ideological outlook. There was, moreover, no intellectual class as a major factor in politics. Where the educated were taken into the civil service, as in China, in ancient Rome, and in the European Middle Ages, the bureaucratic *ethos* and personal dependence on the prince, to say nothing of the type of education preparatory for the civil service career, discouraged the emergence of an ideological orientation. The intrigues of court politics did not foster the success of the ideologically minded man. There was no class of independent professional literary men and journalists, free of patrons and of the need to remain on the right side of the authorities.

The violent political struggles of the Greek city-states and of the last decades of the Roman Republic, even where they involved the

<sup>12</sup>Aron, p. 42. The same view is put forward by Professor D. W. Brogan in his most interesting essay, "Was the French Revolution a Mistake?", *Cambridge Journal*, Vol. I, No. 1 (October 1947), pp. 43-55.

bitterest class antagonisms, did not become ideological. They were fought on behalf of "interests." The notions of "justice" and of the "good social order" did not enter into them except peripherally.

The ideological orientation toward life existed, of course, as it must exist wherever human society exists. It passed judgment on all things, and so it passed judgment on political things. It censured the existing political order as a realm of iniquity, and counselled and predicted its destruction. This ideological attitude toward politics did not, however, enter the sphere of political activity, because the kinds of persons who espoused it or came under its influence were not admitted into the circles which discussed and decided on succession to political office and on the actions of governments.

As long as politics were not an instrument of justice or of the realization of the right social order and were concerned with the mere maintenance of order, the conservation of the power of dynasties and classes which already had or sought it, there was no room for ideological politics. Those who practiced politics were not susceptible to them, except on rare occasions, and they found no following even where great individual personalities were moved by ideological—above all, religious—considerations.

The invention of printing and the possibility arising therefrom of diffusing arguments to a wider public, the Protestant belief that the Bible and not the priesthood is the vehicle of the sacred, the Protestant belief that each man must make his own proper contact with the sacred by his study of the Bible, and the slow and gradual rising of the mass of European populations from their torpor—all of these had much to do with the creation of the necessary conditions for ideological politics. The crucial element, however, was the creation of a class of intellectuals no longer dependent exclusively on patronage or inheritance for their livelihood.

The body of intellectuals which came into existence in the 16th century was a new phenomenon in world history. It consisted of men whose sensibility, intelligence, and imagination carried them beyond the standards and requirements of everyday life; they were no longer forced inevitably to depend on church or state or princely, aristocratic, or mercantile patronage for their existence. Their capacity for loyalty thus liberated, they were endowed with the freedom to attach themselves to symbols beyond those embodied in existing ecclesiastical and governmental institutions. The steady growth in the scale and impor-

tance of this stratum of the population in modern European societies is perhaps the decisive factor in the "ideologization" which, on its better side, has been called the "spiritualization of politics." The intellectuals—who before the development of specialized technical training were co-terminous with the educated classes—have lived in a permanent tension between earthly power and the ideal, which derives from their nature as intellectuals. They have not, however, created from within themselves the imagery and passion of ideological politics. The numerous traditions which they have developed, e.g., the romantic tradition, the scientific tradition, the bohemian tradition, important though they have been in disposing intellectuals towards ideological politics, would scarcely have been sufficient to give to such politics their extraordinary attraction and compellingness.

Ideological politics are rooted in an ideological tradition which lives in our midst through invisible radiations coming down from the depths of our Western past. They are sustained by our Judaic-Christian culture, by passions which are part of our souls, and by the nature of society.

The millenarian tradition which is the oldest source of the ideological outlook is an ever-present potentiality in Christian teaching and experience; it is usually maintained, for most people, most of the time, in a state of latency. It has a living existence in the life of the Protestant sects and in the records of the saints of every Christian society. Even where religious belief has become attenuated or has evaporated, the millenarian expectations and judgments have persisted in an aromatic tradition which, on occasion, becomes crystallized in a sensitive and receptive person. Religious *enthusiasm*, as the late Ronald Knox<sup>18</sup> showed with such compassionate understanding and as Professor Cohn, writing from a very different point of view, has corroborated, has never been absent from Western civilization. As early as pre-Exilic times, Jewish prophets foretold the cataclysmic end of time and the world as we know it, a Day of Wrath and a Last Judgment, when sinners, individual and corporate, would be cast down, and a regenerated Israel would populate Palestine and a second Eden.

The expectations of a Last Judgment on a sinful temporal order took a deep root in the early Christian communities. The tradition did not die out as the Church settled down to live on as an institution. Manichaeism, with its basic distinctions between light and darkness and

<sup>18</sup>*Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion, with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries*, Oxford, 1950.

its conception of the universe as a field of irreconcilable struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, found hospitality in the Christian circles where this chiliastic tradition persisted. No church, indeed, no established institution, could survive if its members expected an imminent end of the world and its subsequent replacement by the Kingdom of God. It was to meet this view that Saint Augustine elaborated his conception of the Church itself as the Kingdom of God on earth. But for those with a great sensitivity to the sacred, and without Saint Augustine's powerful and disciplined intellect, no living church could ever represent the Kingdom of God. Insofar as it refused to preach the proximate realization of the Kingdom of God, it rendered itself subject to their most anguished and harshest criticism.

Professor Cohn, who is not concerned either to support the Marxist view that millenarian sectarianism was merely the ideology of a class conflict expressed in a religious idiom or to espouse the anti-Marxist view which argues that millenarianism was solely an expression of a hypersensitive and perhaps disordered religiosity, is at his best when he shows how it fused with the animosities of class, of ethnic hatreds, and of phantasies of national glory. The hatred-filled phantasies of princes, lords, wealthy merchants, the Pope, Jews, Turks, Italians, Saracens were amalgamated with the frightful images of Satan and the Antichrist. In its meandering and tragic history, full of misery, persecution and violence, rabid and deluded yearnings, false Messiahs, deranged visions, persecutions, and pitched battles, a single complex theme runs unbrokenly. This is the central theme of the ideological orientation towards existence.

The ideological outlook is preoccupied with the evil of the world as it exists; it believes in the immiscibility of good and evil. It distinguishes sharply between the children of light and the children of darkness. It believes that no earthly action can ameliorate or attenuate evil. It exhibits a violent hatred of the existing cosmic order, and especially of its earthly beneficiaries, governmental, economic, and ecclesiastical authorities, indeed, of authorities of any kind. It regards authority as an agent of evil and as a compromise with evil.

The mass of mankind lives in constant temptation and seduction by evil; the petty concerns of daily work and commerce, attachment to family, loyalty to friends, and the quest of private advantage are all inextricably involved with evil. Those who take upon themselves to rule the world as it is are either corrupt in their very nature to begin

with, or become so through their contact with authority, which is diabolical by nature.

The ideological outlook expressed by millenarianism asserts, however, that the reign of evil on the earth is of finite duration. There will come a moment when time and history as we know them shall come to an end. The present period of history will be undone by a cosmic act of judgment which will do justice to the wronged and virtuous by elevating them to eternal bliss, and equal justice to the powerful and wicked by degrading and destroying them for all time to come. The order which will be ushered in by the cosmic last judgment will be a new realm of perfect harmony and peace, in which all men will live in accordance with the ultimate criteria of justice and mutual love. No conflict will mar their existence; there will be no scarcity to degrade and cramp them.

To usher in this glorious epoch requires heroism on the part of the small number of consecrated persons who live strictly in accordance with the dictates of the highest judgment. Heroism is required, above all, to give witness to the truth of the standards which ultimately will come to prevail and to help to inaugurate this totally new phase of existence.

Despite its extraordinary persistence, the millenarian tradition has been no ordinary tradition transmitted by the elders of a society to their next generation. Its reception is not the ordinary reception of tradition as something given, but a search and a yearning. There is no evidence of continuity of the movement of this tradition from person to person, and it is not commonly taught in any society. It is a phenomenon of the sinks and corners of society, and it creates groups which, in a state of inflammation, are remarkably shortlived as compared with the long history of the Churches. The tradition, however, has a long and continuous history.<sup>14</sup> From the Near Eastern seedbed of enthusiastic religiosity, millenarian Christian sectarianism spread from the Near East into Southeastern Europe and North Africa, from Bulgaria into Northern Italy, from Northern Italy into Southern France, from Southern France into the Low Countries, from the Low

<sup>14</sup>Cf. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Review and Herald, Washington, D. C., 1948), Vols. I-IV; Steven Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy*, Cambridge, 1947; Dmitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, Cambridge, 1948; Knox, *op. cit.*; I should like also to call attention to a very sympathetic article by Miss Storm Jameson: "The Dualist Tradition," *Times Literary Supplement*, 6 August 1954.

Countries into Germany and Central Europe and then into England. Yet the mechanism of its transmission remains a mystery. There is some evidence of personal links of the founders and spreaders of particular variants of millenarianism, but this does not explain why the soil was so fertile for their labors.

Similarly, although the inner affinities of millenarianism and modern revolutionary politics are now perfectly obvious,<sup>15</sup> the lines of filiation are more difficult to trace. The German Marxists' discovery of their own ancestry in the Anabaptists of Münster, in the Levellers and the Diggers of the English Civil War,<sup>16</sup> is an acknowledgment of the affinity, but is not evidence of a directly received influence.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the continuity of the millenarian outlook through many different situations arises not from a continuously handed down tradition but from the recurrent attachment to its sources—the Book of Daniel, the Book of Revelations, the Sybilline Books, and the Johannine prophecy, which are available on the edge of our culture to all those who have a need for them. To these, time and again, persons with a yearning for the end of earthly injustice and the transcendence of time in a new and purer realm, resplendent with harmony and love, have turned. In the past century, they have not had to go back to the original sources. Through the heirs of these sources, their transformations into the doctrines of contemporary ideological politics have been available in an idiom more acceptable to the contemporary mind.

Now, if this is no ordinary tradition, transmitted in the way ordinary traditions are transmitted, why then does it persist as such a recurrent theme in Western history? The answer must be sought in Christianity, which contains among its manifold potentialities the ever-present promise of a Second Coming and the unchanging imminence of the ulti-

<sup>15</sup>Aron, Ch. IX, "The Intellectuals in Search of a Religion," pp. 264-294; Erich Voegelín, *Die politische Religionen*, Stockholm, 1939, pp. 39-42; Fritz Gerlich, *Der Kommunismus als Lehre vom tausendjährigen Reich*, München, 1920, esp. pp. 17-78.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Friedrich Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, New York, 1926; Karl Kautsky, *Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation*, London, 1897; Edward Bernstein, *Cromwell and Coommunism: Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Civil Revolution*, London, 1930; Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution*, München, 1921.

<sup>17</sup>The German working class movements of the 1840's and British working class radicalism did, it is true, thrive in areas which had been the scenes of Protestant sectarianism from the 16th to the 18th centuries. It is a plausible hypothesis that the ideological traditions of sectarian life made for a receptivity to revolutionary and radical ideas by virtue of their correspondences; in turn, aided by theorists more deeply dyed by the revolutionary traditions of the French Revolution and the Hegelian (and ultimately Christian) idea of history, the tradition of religious enthusiasm was transformed into an apparently secular heroic doctrine of ideological politics.



mate catastrophe which precedes the second coming of a Messiah. Although the central institutions of modern societies, out of the very necessities of their continuing existence and the nature of the human beings who live in them, preclude the widespread practice and observance of the ideological orientation, there are always some persons in these societies to whom the ideological orientation has an especial appeal. It is always there for those who have the ideological need to be in saving contact with the ultimate. Every society has its outcasts, its wretched, and its damned, who cannot fit into the routine requirements of social life at any level of authority and achievement. Max Weber said that salvationary religions are most commonly found among declining strata of handicraftsmen and small enterprisers. This proposition is capable of generalization. Those who are constricted, who find life as it is lived too hard, are prone to the acceptance of the ideological outlook on life. A society in which the lot of the many becomes more constricted, in which they feel more deserted and more uncared for as a result of the failure of their rulers, will encourage this proneness to seek realization.<sup>18</sup>

Naturally, not all those who live in a broken and disadvantaged condition are drawn equally by the magnet of the ideological orientation. Special personal qualities are required.<sup>19</sup> It takes a hyper-sensitivity to ultimate standards, to the sacred, and this is a quality which, al-

<sup>18</sup>Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, London, 1948; Georges Balandier, *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire*, Paris, 1955, pp. 417-486; and Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia*, London, 1957, show the connection between salvationary, messianic religion and the deprivations arising from the disruption of traditional institutions.

<sup>19</sup>Professor Cohn declares that paranoid tendencies are a necessary condition for the expansion of millenarianism. His view is supported not only by the content of millenarian imagery and aspirations which his book so richly describes, but by contemporary experience of millenarian groups, religious and political. He does not claim that all members of such groups must be paranoid, but that the leaders must be such. "... there are always very large numbers of people who are prone to see life in black and white, who feel a deep need for perfect saviours to adore and wicked enemies to hate; people ... who without being paranoiac yet have a strong tendency towards paranoid states of mind. At a time when such tendencies are being encouraged by external circumstances, the appearance of a messianic leader preaching the doctrine of the final struggle and the coming of the new age can produce remarkable results—and that irrespective of whether the leader is a sincere fanatic or an imposter or a mixture of both. Those who are first attracted will mostly be people who seek a sanction for the emotional needs generated by their own unconscious conflicts ... these first followers, precisely because they are true believers, can endow their new movement with such confidence, energy and ruthlessness that it will attract into its wake vast multitudes of people who are themselves not at all paranoid but simply harassed, hungry or frightened" (pp. 311-312). There is much truth in this well-balanced picture, but it seems to me that he omits the religious or ideological sensitivity—the sensitivity to remote things—which is not necessarily connected with paranoia, any more than imagination or curiosity is connected with it.



though rare in all populations, is found in some measure at all times and particularly at times of crisis. There are human beings who, by personal constitution, are sensitive to the ultimate grounds of existence, just as there are human beings with a need for and a capacity for abstract reasoning, for understanding the mysteries of the universe in accordance with the powers of their reason. Some become mystics, some become scientists, others philosophers. Others who are filled with the sense of injustice and of grievance against the earthly order in its various manifestations, political and ecclesiastical, as well as familial and sexual, reach out toward and seek fusion with the symbols of apocalyptic fulfillment. That is why the ideological orientation so frequently draws to itself madmen full of hatred and fear—the paranoids who play such an important role in Professor Cohn's interpretation. Ideological sensitivity, even if it did not draw on the accumulated hatred and aggressiveness of its followers, would be separatist and in tension with the "world" of normal traditional society. Its utopianism and its quest for perfect harmony would put it at odds with the world of conflicting interests, half-measures, and self-seeking. The addition of the hatred and fear of those who feel injured and neglected adds a highly combustible fuel to its fire. For this reason, the ideological outlook is full of the imagery of violence and destruction, and its practice is often crowded with actual acts of brutality and a heartless asceticism, while preaching a message of an ultimate condition of love and peace enveloping all human beings.<sup>20</sup>

Ideological politics have their nerve in this need to be in contact with the sacred. They live from grievance and the feeling of injustice, and no conceivable society can attain the condition in which everyone could be permanently free from grievance and the feeling of injustice, any more than any society could live up to the standards affirmed by the most saintly prophets and maddest zealots of the apocalypse.

The tendency of intellectuals in modern Western countries, and latterly in Asian and African countries, to incline toward ideological politics does not, however, derive only from this permanent feature of the Judaic-Christian religious culture, which affects even those who do not accept its explicit articles of faith.<sup>21</sup> As intellectuals, they also live in

<sup>20</sup>One need only read the pacifist press to see how the preaching of peace and love is combined with a pleasure in the contemplation of maimed bodies and universal destruction. Mazzini once wrote, "I am inclined to love men at a distance . . . contact makes me hate them." Bolton King, *Life of Mazzini*, London (Everyman edition), 1912, p. 55.

<sup>21</sup>Is it entirely an accident that Communism in India has achieved its greatest success so far in an area where previously Christian missionary education had reached

the flowing stream of other traditions which are particular to them as intellectuals.

It is probably not an accident that most of the traditions of the modern intellectuals seem to dispose them towards an ideological outlook. It seems to be almost given by their attachment to symbols which transcend everyday life and its responsibilities. Some of these traditions have arisen as effluvial by-products of specific intellectual activities, as, for example, scientism has arisen from scientific research and analysis. Others, like the tradition of bohemianism, have arisen from the age and mode of life of persons whose inclinations drive them towards an effort to be independent of traditions and conventions and on whom their devotion to the symbols of artistic and literary creation, and the restricted market for the sale of their creations, enforces material poverty and uncertainty. And still others, like the tradition of Romanticism, are the complex products of a profound movement of the human spirit, so intricate and multifarious that it seems almost inexplicable.

Let us consider some of these traditions of the intellectuals, with regard to their contact with the ideological outlook and their inherent disposition towards ideological politics. Let us consider scientism first. Scientism entails the denial of the truth of tradition. It asserts that life, if it is to be lived on the highest plane, should be lived in accordance with "scientific principles," and that these principles should be achieved by the rigorously rational examination of actual experience, systematically confronted through the elaborate and orderly scrutiny and experiment which constitute scientific research. It regards the generally accepted traditions of society as impediments to the attainment of these principles, which are ultimately the principles immanent in the universe. As such, therefore, scientism constitutes a vigorous criticism of traditional and institutional life, and a refusal to accept authority on any grounds except those of scientific principle. It holds before mankind the ideal of a society in which scientists, and administrators and politicians guided by scientists, will rule and in which the ordinary citizens will hold no beliefs and perform no actions which are not sanctioned by scientific principles.<sup>22</sup> This rejection of the prevail-

a larger proportion of the population than in other parts of India? It is not intended, however, to explain Indian leftism solely by an ultimate derivation from a secularized Christian outlook.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. F. A. Hayek, *The Counter-Revolution of Science*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1952, which provides the best account of one of the most important sources of scientism, that which derives from Descartes and which reaches its fullest elaboration in the

ing order, and its central institutions and traditions, and the appreciation of an ideal order governed by the ultimate principles of science, obviously possess close affinities with certain features of the millenarian outlook. The hostility towards the barrier which received tradition raises between the human being and the ultimate principles of the universe, the dispraise of the authority of institutions, and the vision of an ideal order (infused by and conducted in accordance with the ultimate principles of universal existence) are only a few of the lines of affinity which link these two traditions. It is therefore not difficult to understand how the acceptance of the scientific tradition can prepare the way to the acceptance of a secularized millenarianism and thus lead on to ideological politics.

Romanticism too flows in the same direction, feeding into and swelling the sea of ideological politics. Romanticism too views any existing order as repugnant because it mediates, compromises, and deforms the ideal. The ideal of romanticism is the spontaneous and direct expression of the essential nature of the individual and the collectivity. Both the individualistic and the collectivistic variants of the Romantic tradition placed great emphasis on the direct and full experience of the ultimate value of individual creativity or of the spirit of the community (folk or national or local). Like the millenarian outlook, Romanticism regards immediate experience of the sacred as a touchstone of the good. Whatever is mediated by calculation or contrivance, by organization or compromise is antithetical to it. That is why modern large-scale society as it has emerged since the end of the 18th century is abhorrent to those who live in the tradition of Romanticism. Civil society, which allows so much space for private concerns, and which permits neither the single individual nor the total community the complete realization of their essential potentialities, is seen by Romanticism as a system of arbitrary repression, in contrast with some ideal realm of freedom and fulfillment. Civil society requires compromise and reasonableness, prudent self-restraint, and responsibility, and these are all deviations

work of St. Simon and Comte. B. F. Skinner, *Walden II*, New York, 1948, is an extreme contemporary statement of the scientific position, to which there are numerous approximations, not the least the Marxist. Marxist scientism is best represented by Professor J. D. Bernal, who has written, "Science has put in our power the means of transforming human life to a degree at least as great as those provided by the technical developments of the origin of civilization but the change differs in one crucial respect in that they can be consciously undertaken. What we can see straight away is the possibility of the removal of most of the hindrances to full human and social life that exist in our civilization." "Science and Civilization," in C. Day Lewis, *The Mind in Chains*, London, 1937, pp. 194-195.

from the unqualifiedness and spontaneity which Romanticism demands of all action. Romanticism is, as a result, at war with civil society.

The influence of Romanticism on the outlook of intellectuals runs far beyond those circles who knowingly acknowledge its sovereignty over them. It has become universally pervasive. It is a major determinant of the attitude of the intellectuals towards politics and the authority of institutions. And different though it is in content from the frightful and dazzling visions of millenarianism, they both work to the same end—the rejection of the existing order in the name of a pattern of existence more infused with the sacred.

In their spiritual genealogy, the traditions of bohemianism and populism are closely related to Romanticism. Bohemianism had an older history before it developed an *ethos* of its own. The restless scholars of the medieval universities<sup>23</sup> and the homeless minstrels and minnesingers who lived from begging, thieving, and the hope of selling their artistic wares were the ancestors of the modern bohemian. They were footloose; they were not incorporated into the routines and responsibilities which filled most of the medieval European social structure. They would not accept the burdens of family and vocation, and sought only to serve their own creative impulse and pleasure.

The development of printing and the appearance of a body of writers trying to maintain themselves from the sale of their written product added a substantial body of persons in Western Europe whose uncertain existence and whose intellectual sensitivity forced them into an irregular course of life. Bohemian practice and bohemian *ethos* were well under way in London and Paris before the beginning of the 19th century. The widened range of education and the increased reading public, fed by the romantic idea of the creative man, the lonely genius who knows no law, made the café intellectual, the bohemian writer and artist into a major figure of life in all the great capitals of the Western countries. Paris was the center of this life, but London, Berlin, Munich, St. Petersburg, Rome, and New York all had their bohémias. The traditions of the French revolutions of 1789, 1830, 1848, and the commune of 1871, and the tradition of anarchism, doctrinal and practical, found a warm reception in the Parisian bohemia, and with varying degrees of attenuation and adaptation to national political tradi-

<sup>23</sup>Miss Helen Waddell, describing these forerunners of bohemianism, quoted the Council of Salzburg: "They go alone in public naked, lie in bake-ovens, frequent taverns, games, harlots, earn their bread by their vices and cling with inveterate obstinacy to their sect, so that no hope of their amendment remaineth." *Wandering Scholars* (7th ed.), London, 1942, p. 188.

tions, they found acceptance in the bohémias of the other countries as well. Antinomianism—moral, aesthetic, and political—was at home there, and the political police kept their eyes peeled for revolutionaries in bohemian intellectual circles. Bohemians were at war with society,<sup>24</sup> some on well-thought-out grounds, seeking a free life less encumbered by traditional standards, others out of an incoherent and impulsive aggressiveness against any sort of authority, cultural or institutional, and an inability to live in a settled routine of work or life. There were many points at which bohemianism and millenarianism diverged. Bohemianism was usually against the Church as well as against Christianity; millenarianism was Christian and only hostile to the authority of the Church. Bohemianism was usually opposed to asceticism; millenarianism was often ascetic. They had in common, however, their repugnance for *mere* tradition and for the constituted authorities who were associated with it.

Populism—the belief in the wisdom and the supreme moral value of the ordinary man of the lower classes—is a new phenomenon. In some respects it was a creation of Romanticism, but it was also an outgrowth of the moral egalitarianism of the Christian sects and of life at the peripheries of Western culture. By its praise of the uneducated and the humble, it places itself in opposition to the great and mighty of the earth; it denies their cultural creativity while imputing true creativity to the lower classes. Populism charges academic science and scholarship with a preoccupation with bloodless symbols unconnected with the essence of life. When it becomes political, populism asserts that the standards of the ordinary people should prevail against the standards represented by the authoritative institutions of society—the State, the Law, the Church, the Universities. Thus the populist tradition, too, like the other traditions cited, expresses a deep alienation from traditional culture and from the society ruled through civil politics and the equilibrium of power.

Populism and millenarianism share many significant features. Both repudiate the official traditions of learning, millenarianism declaring that the prevailing interpretation of sacred texts falsifies their true meaning, and populism charging the learned with the transfiguration of authority and with enmity towards the truth expressed in the popular will. Both oppose the mediation of contact with the highest values,

<sup>24</sup>Baudelaire once wrote, "Usefulness to the community always seemed to me a most hideous thing in man." *The Essence of Laughter and other Essays, Journals and Letters* (Edited by Peter Quennell), N. Y., 1956, p. 178.

by authoritative institutions, by priests, professors, and parliamentarians. Both are against the cold-blooded and impersonal rules of institutions; both are responsive to charisma. The conceptions of the people and of the proletariat easily merge, as do those of people and nation, and so populism can turn without difficulty into an ideological political orientation.

These are not the only traditions of the modern intellectual, but most of the others have the same tendency. Of course, these traditions are not accepted equally by all intellectuals. They are most widely accepted among men of letters and academic scholars and scientists. Nonetheless, although an increasing proportion of intellectuals in the broader sense, i.e., persons who have passed through colleges and universities, are engaged in practical tasks in administration and technology which curb their ideological predispositions, the atmosphere in which they acquire their qualifications, and the traditions which adhere to their professions, give to many of them some impulsion in this direction. The impetus to an ideological outlook inherent in the very constitution of intellectual activities would probably not be enough to account for the upsurge of ideological politics of the past century and a half. It has required the confluence of numerous traditions and their common confrontation with the situation of modern society to release the flood.

#### IV

Traditions seldom die. They recede very slowly, yielding before new traditions which replace them by incorporating elements of their predecessors and assimilating them to new elements. The new traditions can grow only by attachment to older traditions which they expand and elaborate.

It seems excessively sanguine, therefore, for us to congratulate ourselves on the end of the ideological age. We would be more realistic to speak of its subsidence, rather than of its end. Old traditions, such as millenarianism, deep in the marrow of our intellectual bones, traditions such as Romanticism, which are at the very heart of the modern age, are not likely to disappear so soon after the fury and the disillusionment of the first fifty years of this century.

What we may legitimately hope for in the coming decades is a condition of quiescence of ideological politics and of the ideological disposition from which it springs. This quiescence can be sustained only if an effective alternative is available. Civil politics are this alternative.



Civil politics are based on civility, which is the virtue of the citizen,<sup>26</sup> of the man who shares responsibly in his own self-government, either as a governor or as one of the governed. Civility is compatible with other attachments to class, to religion, to profession, but it regulates them out of respect for the common good.

Civil politics do not stir the passions; they do not reveal man at the more easily apprehensible extremes of heroism and saintliness. They involve the prudent exercise of authority, which tries to foresee the consequences of that exercise while appreciating the undeterminable limitations of human powers and the uncertainties of foresight. The civil politician must be aware of the vague line between the exercise of authority and the manipulation of human beings as objects outside his moral realm. He must shun that line and yet on occasion go over it, realizing the moral costs of such crossing over and the difficulties and the necessity of crossing back into the domain of legitimacy. He must maintain a sense of affinity with his society and share with his fellow citizens their membership in a single transpersonal entity, while bearing in mind their unresponsiveness to the ideal and their incapacity to sustain a continuous and intense relationship with the sacred. He must maintain this sense of substantial affinity while being aware of their lesser willingness to be responsible for the common good and while keeping his own feeling of responsibility for it alive and taut.

The difficulties of civil political conduct are great in democracies. Their large size and the impossibility of direct contact between politicians and their constituents are strains on the sense of moral affinity which, lacking the support of personal relationships, must be self-sustaining. Civility was rare in aristocratic societies, partly because aristocratic virtue—the virtue of the warrior—and civil virtue—the virtue of the citizen—are so far apart in their inner constitutions and particularly because aristocratic systems by their nature restrict man's development of the empathic sense of affinity. Liberal democratic regimes place great burdens on the civil sense because they permit open conflict and acknowledge and thus encourage partisanship. The common good is always hard to define, but it is rendered even harder when

<sup>26</sup>Civility has meant more than good manners, and it is an impoverishment of our vocabulary as well as a sign of the impoverishment of our thought on political matters that this word has been allowed to dwindle to the point where it has come to refer to good manners in face-to-face relationships. Two recent books by eminent British writers—*Traditions of Civility*, by Sir Ernest Barker, Cambridge, 1948; *Good Behaviour: Being a Study of Certain Types of Civility*, by Sir Harold Nicolson, London, 1955—show no awareness of the older meaning of the term.



it must gratify and reconcile opposing interests and simultaneously attempt to guard values for which no strong partisan contends, but which, nonetheless, are essential to a good society. The politician must be partisan himself, while civility requires a partial transcendence of partisanship, as well as an empathic appreciation of the other parties within the circle of the civil political order. Partisanship must be carried on with the simultaneous perception of the civil and moral order which embraces both one's opponents and one's allies.

Civil politics—which are by no means identical with democratic politics—are especially difficult in contemporary society. The complex tasks which governments undertake and which nearly everyone thinks they should undertake, make so great the amount of material that a politician who devotes himself to the matter must master, and so many the obligations to which he must attend, that reflection is deprived of the quiet and leisure which it needs to mature. The complexity of the tasks renders easy understanding of them beyond the power of most of the citizenry and encourages a depreciatory attitude towards the capacities of the electorate, thus inhibiting the vitality of the sense of affinity between citizens and leaders that is essential to civil politics. The deep and increasing penetration of populism in all countries results in a greater pressure on the politician for the immediate satisfaction of class and sectional ends. The development of techniques of mass communication and of chemical, surgical, and psychological modes of controlling human behavior presents continuous temptations to the politician to respond to the incessant demands by manipulation. Not that he always by any means yields or that the techniques would be successful if applied, but the mere existence of the putative possibilities creates an atmosphere which impedes the cultivation and practice of civility.

Civil politics entail judging things on their own merits—hard enough in any case where the merits and demerits in any complex issue are so obscure and intertwined—and they also require respect for tradition. Civility requires respect for tradition because the sense of affinity on which it rests is not momentary only but reaches into the past and future. As to the past, civil politics appreciate the factual reality of past achievements as well as the human quality of those who, by virtue of having once been alive, command our respect for their names and the things they valued; as to the future, civil politics see the unity, in essence, of the present generation and those which are to follow, not

just in a biological sense, but in the order of value as well. The population of a civil polity is in its fundamental being a continuous procession of those living in the present, preceded by those who have lived, shading off into the obscurity of time past, and to be followed by those who have still to live, shading off into the even more shadowy obscurity of time still unelapsed.

The traditional consciousness is not, however, one which encourages the direct contemplation of the merits and demerits of things as they are. The utilitarian mind usually has little patience with the pastness of things and is even disposed to assume that the mere fact of having been appropriate to the past is a disqualification for relevance to the present and future. Yet both the need for continuity—i.e., the maintenance of affinity with the past—and the need to draw on the benefits of the intelligence and artfulness exercised in the past, render imperative an appreciation of tradition.

Above all, civil politics require an understanding of the complexity of virtue, that no virtue stands alone, that every virtuous act costs something in terms of other virtuous acts, that virtues are intertwined with evils, and that no theoretical system of a hierarchy of virtues is ever realizable in practice. It has been a major fault of ideological politics that they have made the mistake of thinking that a coherent, systematic doctrine could guide conduct unfailingly along a straight line which made no compromise with evil. Ideological politics believed that the more strictly one adhered to a virtue, the more intensely one was attached to it, and the more completely one fulfilled it, the better would be one's actions.

This was the basis of the idea of the political spectrum which ran from the pole of virtue—be it left or right—to the other pole, the extreme and complete negation of virtue. The realism and circumspection of civil politics cannot accommodate such a simplification.

Practicing politicians do indeed manage to avoid the excesses which are inevitable in such simplifications. As Professor Aron shows, French politicians in the 19th and 20th centuries, in one of the countries of the most extreme ideological politics among intellectuals, have in practice usually not been dominated by this distinction between "left" and "right."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, this has been one of the reasons why French intel-

<sup>20</sup>The avoidance of ideological politics is not synonymous with the practice of civil politics. Politics practiced in accordance with the prevailing constellation of interests is a third alternative, and it is one which is most commonly pursued by politicians. If the "interests" are intractable, then the civil order can be as badly damaged as it would be by ideological politics.

lectuals have been so alienated from the political practice of their country.

The practice of politics imposes some measure of civility, but it also stirs the temptation of demagoguery and offers the easy solution of satisfying the most clamorous sectional interests. If intellectuals could settle down to a more reasonable political outlook, their concern for the more general and for what transcends the immediate advantages of particular "interests" would infuse a most precious ingredient into political life.

## V

Is it plausible to expect intellectuals to renounce their attachments to anti-political traditions in which they have lived for centuries? Can it be expected that intellectuals will be drawn down from the heights of the ultimate ideal so that they could, while still remaining intellectuals, tolerate the burden imposed by the vicissitudes of maintaining themselves as politicians who have invested their future in the unpredictabilities of politics, and by the task of keeping a society going? Can intellectuals be brought to appreciate politics which are concerned to keep society on a steady course, as much concerned to keep it from becoming worse as to make it better? Can they be expected to affirm a political practice which provides no final solution and which does not promise to bring society or the human race to a resting point of perfect fulfillment?

The civil politics which must replace ideological politics in the affections of the intellectuals have many competitive disadvantages. Their traditions are fewer and frailer. Cicero, who preached and tried to practice the virtues of civil politics, has been called an opportunist, and his assassination by the side with which he compromised has been regarded as evidence of his failure as a politician. Tacitus spoke on behalf of civility through his censure of its degradation in the Empire.<sup>27</sup> Clarendon's civil wisdom was put on paper in the rueful melancholy of exile and with the distrust of power which is the destiny of the disappointed and disregarded counsellor to princes. The fate of More and Raleigh and the disillusionment of the humanists who sought to

<sup>27</sup>"So corrupted, indeed, debased was that age by sycophancy that not only the foremost citizens who were forced to save their grandeur by servility but every ex-consul, most of the ex-praetors and a host of inferior senators would rise in eager rivalry to propose shameful and preposterous motions. Tradition says that Tiberius as often as he left the Senate House used to exclaim in Greek, 'How ready these men are to be slaves' " (*Annals*, Book III, Section 65).

guide the conduct of princes have left bitter memories of the tribulations of the intellectual in politics. On the other side, the image of politics reflected by those "advisors to princes" whose names stand out in our minds, Machiavelli above all, Halifax, et al., have given an appearance of justice to the condemnation of politics which the intellectual, devoted to the ideal of his calling, has often expressed.

The intellectual who seeks the path of civil politics has little to cheer and fortify him in his quest. He has many of his own prejudices to overcome—the whole complex of the traditions of ideological politics, and, in America, his traditional aversion for the politics of the pork-barrel and the patronage lists, and his image of the 42nd Ward Young Men's Democratic Club, with its smokers and its belching boorishness, and of the harsh selfishness of the Union League Clubs.<sup>28</sup> He has no feeling of standing in a great intellectual tradition. There is no equivalent civil tradition to counterpose to the subterranean pervasiveness of the millenarian tradition, to provide an atmosphere in which he can breathe. He has the memory of Woodrow Wilson and Thomas Masaryk, Disraeli and Gladstone, and Guizot, to set alongside the far more numerous intellectuals approving of bomb-throwing and assassination, themselves engaged in wire-pulling and plotting, impatient and contemptuous of the political profession.

If civil politics depend on an acceptance of the limitations of human powers, their establishment in the second half of the present century will not be rendered easier by scientific developments. The advances in physiology, biochemistry, neurology, applied mathematics, cybernetics, and the foolish propaganda made by some of the enthusiasts of psychology and the social sciences, can hardly induce a feeling of modesty in man, nor can they be expected to promote that fellow-feeling necessary to civil politics.

Nor, for that matter, can the specialization of education which accompanies this scientific progress bring much support. Quite the opposite. It is not that the humanistic education of the past has provided much of a bulwark against the ideological outlook. Extreme specialization, however, adds a further strain to the weak sense of affinity. It is true that extreme specialization which reduces the contact of the

<sup>28</sup>This is by no means confined to capitalistic America or to bourgeois politicians. Ferdinand Lassalle once said, "I have a real horror of workers' delegations where I always hear the same speeches and have to shake hard, hot and moist hands" (David Footman, *The Primrose Path*, London, 1946, p. 183). The intellectuals' attitude toward politicians, regardless of their class, is epitomized in: "I met Murder on the way. He had a mask like Castlereagh."

intellectual with the broad range of traditions of the intellectual life of the past also restricts this relationship with many of the ideological elements in the traditions of the intellectuals. In many fields, however, and particularly in those of increasing importance, it exposes him more fully to the scientific tradition. Thus, while it increases his matter-of-factness, it also increases his pride, his contempt for the past, and his confidence in the boundless superiority of the future, and these are not so congenial to civility.

If ideological politics thrive in conditions of danger, what are we to think of the chances of civil politics in an age in which peace is maintained by a conscious fear of cataclysmic destruction by nuclear weapons? These awful possibilities cannot avoid stirring up latent apocalyptic images and expectations. These real dangers make the sober, moderate, small-scale measures of civil politics appear excessively puny alongside the monstrous tasks which nuclear weapons impose on governments.

It should not be thought that civil politics can be stifled only by ideological politics, or that millenarianism is the decisive determinant of radical alienation. Radical transformations in society can be undertaken without millenarian impulsion. Western and Oriental antiquity have known revolutions without ideologies. Every social order, even the most just, will have some victims, and every population will contain antinomian personalities. These alone instigate tendencies towards a sort of proto-ideological politics, even when there are no ideological traditions living in the open or under the surface.

Finally, civil politics are not the only alternative to ideological politics for the intellectuals. They have in some instances entered upon political careers like professional politicians, given up their intellectual concerns and attachments, and devoted themselves to the conventional round of vote-getting, interest representation, self-preservation, and self-advancement. They could yield to the customary temptations of the vain and egocentric, demagoguery, flattery, and opportunism. They could, in short, conform to their own prevailing image of normal political life.

This, however, is not likely. What is far more likely is withdrawal—angry withdrawal or sad and serene withdrawal. The traditions of withdrawal among the intellectuals are among the profoundest in our intellectual inheritance. One can be anti-political without being ideological. This was the dominant trend among American intellectuals from

the Jacksonian Revolution until the Russian Revolution; and it is unfortunately, despite the charges of conformity, of "other-directedness," and of being "organization men," still the prevalent current among American intellectuals today. The valiant effort to embrace "Our Country and Our Culture" is not a resounding success as far as civil politics are concerned.<sup>29</sup> The repudiation of ideological politics has not led to the espousal or practice of civil politics. The life of American society is affirmed, but its political life and the civil element in its political life are not.

The situation in Great Britain is not very different. Great Britain has a better record in civil politics than any other country in the world, and its intellectuals have their proper share in that record. What is the situation today? The post-war idyll has ended in disenchantment. "Butskellism" is in retreat. The "angry young men" are on the rampage. Even the most amiable Mr. Kingsley Amis, who says that he is, when he has to choose, a Labour Party man, cannot take politics seriously. His heart is not in it.<sup>30</sup> He, like those with whom his name is coupled, is distrustful of the "professional espouser of causes." The humiliation of the Suez fiasco and the danger of the hydrogen bomb have seriously damaged the British intellectuals' capacity for civil politics. Even a sober, responsible intellectual of long and honorable political experience, Mr. Christopher Hollis, tells his fellow intellectuals that the main task before the British electorate is to discredit the two major political parties, even though he expects no serious "Liberal revival."<sup>31</sup> Mr. John Osborne, who has no such background of experience of political responsibility, is far harsher in his anti-politics. "I can't go on laughing at the idiots who rule our lives. . . . They are no longer funny because they are not merely dangerous, they are murderers . . . they are stupid, insensitive, unimaginative beyond hope, uncreative, and murderous."<sup>32</sup>

## VI

Can the intellectuals re-educate themselves to a civil state of mind? Can they keep the traditions of ideological politics quiescent while they modify their own outlook? Can they take advantage of the pres-

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Newton Arvin, et al., *America and the Intellectual* (Partisan Review Series No. 4), New York, 1953.

<sup>30</sup>*Socialism and the Intellectuals*, Fabian Tract 304, London, 1957.

<sup>31</sup>"What Shall we do Next Time?" *The Spectator* (No. 6765), February 21, 1958, pp. 225-226.

<sup>32</sup>"They Call It Cricket," in Tom Maschler (ed.), *Declaration*, London, 1957, p. 67.



ent lull in ideological politics in the West and develop and fortify the incipient impulses of civility which the harsh experiences of the past half-century stirred into movement?

One condition of the success of this effort at self-“civilization” is that we should not think that we can or should completely extirpate the ideological heritage. There are valuable elements in that inheritance which are worthy of conservation in any political outlook which lays claim to our respect. The demand for moral equality, the distrust of authority and of the institutions which it conducts for its own continuance, the insistence on justice, and the call to a heroic existence, even the belief in the earthly paradise and the realm of freedom, all have some validity in them. To deny them will only lay civil politics open to the charge—not unjustified—of being philistine politics in the worst sense, without feeling or sympathy, unimaginative, timorously clinging to what already exists. The ideological element in our intellectual classes will not die out so easily and so soon that its successors will be able to escape unscathed while conducting politics which, while called civil, are merely concerned with the maintenance of order and keeping things as they are.<sup>33</sup>

These impulses in the human heart will not be disregarded. The fact that they have been forced to an extreme and cast into the framework of unrealizable hopes does not mean that they are in themselves immoral. The discredit into which their doctrinaire proponents have deservedly fallen should not be extended to them. Life would be poorer without them, and a political system which sought to proceed entirely without them or entirely against them would find the most sensitive spirits of its society once more drawn up in embittered and irreconcilable opposition.

It has not been the substantive values sought by ideological politics which have done such damage. Rather it has been the rigidity, the exclusiveness, and the extremity with which particular values have been sought. There is nothing evil about loyalty to one’s community, national or ethnic or cultural, nor is there anything wicked in the appreciation of equality or the devotion to any particular ideal. What is so malign is the elevation of one value, such as equality or national or

<sup>33</sup>One of the dangers of the New Conservatism is that it fails to see that civil politics are as eager for improvement as they are ready to conserve what has come down from the past. Cf. Charles Parkin, *The Moral Basis of Burke’s Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1956, Ch. VI, pp. 109-130; also Mr. Kristol’s perspicacious essay in the *Yale Review*, mentioned earlier.



ethnic solidarity, to supremacy over all others, and the insistence on its exclusive dominion in every sphere of life.<sup>34</sup>

Civil politics therefore will have a better chance to obtain more enduring devotion among intellectuals if their proponents do not disavow all continuity whatsoever with the substantive values of ideological politics. Correspondingly, their chances for success will be enhanced if the prudence they extol is exercised in finding a just balance among the contending values rather than in merely seeking self-maintenance, which will degenerate into unprincipled opportunism.

A complete disavowal of every line of affinity between civility and ideology will not only be false in fact but would turn civility into an ideology. Civility would become an ideology of pure politics concerned with no substantive values except the acquisition and retention of power and the maintenance of public order and with absolutely no other interest. Civility would take upon itself the onus of the very same moral separatism for which it criticizes ideological politics, if it denied its affinity with the substantive values which the ideological outlook holds and distorts.

## VII

How can intellectuals retain those elements of Romanticism which prize spontaneity and genuineness of expression, and which aid the cultivation of individuality, while curbing their expansiveness? By excessive demands for individuality and the consequent exaggeration of the restrictions which institutional life imposes on it, Romanticism will discredit any social order and turn the intellectuals against it and arouse the custodians of order against the intellectuals. The "imperialism" which the late Baron Ernst Seillière bemoaned in so many volumes can disrupt any social order, and above all a liberal order. A way must be found to retain many of the values of Romanticism while restricting their expansiveness.

A renewal of the old idea, fundamental to modern liberalism, of a separation of the spheres is needed. It can, of course, be realized only very incompletely; economic life cannot be completely independent of government and politics and *vice versa*; religion and politics cannot be

<sup>34</sup>Few writers have made this criticism of ideological politics, while retaining a compassionate sympathy for their ideals, as well as Conrad. Natalie Haldin says at the end of *Under Western Eyes*. "I must own to you that I shall never give up looking forward to the day when all discord shall be silenced . . . and the weary men united at last . . . feel saddened by their victory, because so many ideas have perished for the triumph of one. . . ."

completely separated; culture and politics cannot be completely separated. Nonetheless, while acknowledging and accepting their necessary collaboration and affinity, it is very important that the guardians, practical and intellectual, of each of the spheres should be aware of the desirability, in principle, of their separateness. This would be a bulwark against the romantic—and ideological—insistence on the universal application of a single set of standards. The separation of the different spheres of life would not please those ideological politicians and intellectuals who seek complete consistency. Without it, however, civility would be extinguished and our best intellectual traditions would be frustrated.

It should be quite possible in practice to realize a far-reaching separation of the spheres while maintaining their overlaps and affinities. This is in fact done to a large extent in societies of the West, however imperfectly and unprincipledly. The real difficulty is to bring about the intellectual's acceptance of it as a reasonable policy. There is not such a completely unbridgeable antinomy between individuality and institutions as Romanticism insists—although there must inevitably be some tension. The intellectual's distrust of the ongoing life in the spheres outside his own arises from the defects in his sense of affinity.

The nature of the sense of affinity which binds the members of a society together is a mystery. It seems somehow connected with the empathic capacities of the individual—not just his empathy for persons whom he encounters in concrete form, in person, or through written or plastic symbols, but for classes of persons who must necessarily remain anonymous. Up to a certain point, it goes hand in hand with individuality, and societies which do not know individuality also live without a sense of civil affinity. It is shrivelled and shrunken by fear, and when it is restricted, it is in its turn conducive to fear of one's fellow men. If somehow the intellectuals could be got over their almost primordial terror of and fascination by authority, which, they fear, crushes their individuality, the movement for civility would make a tremendous advance.

Modern Western societies have witnessed a diminution in the moral distance separating the higher and the lower classes. This has in part been a result of the changes in the distribution of national income which have raised the lower strata and diminished the upper strata, so that standards of life are now very much nearer to each other than they have ever been before, however considerable the differences re-

main, and should, to some extent, still remain. But more significant, I think, is the change in the civil consciousness which has taken place in Western societies. This is in some measure a result of the inner development of the potentialities of the Protestant idea—the same complex of ideas and sentiments which has aggravated the millenarian disposition. The notion that every man has a spark of divinity in him, that all men participate in a common substance—sacred in the last analysis but civil in its concrete and mediated forms—has grown out of the conjunction of the modern national state and Christian protestantism. From this conjunction grew the idea of the citizen, and from it our modern idea of the civil order as a stratum of being in which all the members of a state participate.

The modest flowering of civility in the modern world is a new thing in history. Pericles' Funeral Oration foreshadowed its program. The great Roman forerunners were, however grandiose, no more than adumbrations of a human possibility, rather than indications of a well-functioning civility in ancient times. The growth of civility has been halting and very imperfect. Its growth has been attended by an exacerbation of ideology—and the two seem in the modern epoch to have some obscure and intricate interdependence. Yet it does seem that with the spread of individuality—imperfect now and never perfectly realizable—in the wider reaches of the population, the sense of civil affinity has increased its scope and power among the lower strata, who previously existed as objects of authority and economic power but did not dwell within the same moral and civil domain as their rulers. There is now in all strata, on the average, a higher civil sense than earlier phases of Western society have ever manifested—and this despite class conflicts and ideological separatism and irreconcilability. Even ethnic barriers seem slowly to be yielding to the rising tide of civility. Is it too much to hope that the intellectuals, who have provided such illustrious antecedents in the true "civilization" of politics, will themselves come more fully into this process, and thus, by one of the great continental drifts of history, bring the age of ideology to an end?