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Pride and Solace: The Functions and Limits of Political Theory. by Norman Jacobson

Review by: H. Malcolm MacDonald

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so readily confused. Historical analysis shows the issue not to be social conflict or political skill but a more intricate question of how individual and group rights have been redefined over the centuries, often by intermediate compromises between town and country or between class and guild politics. One of the fascinating insights that emerges is that the absolute monarchies, which in fact were often not as "absolute" as early advocates of democracy thought, provide the transition to middle class rule by putting forth the essential groundwork for administration, taxation, and law that the bourgeoisie later use to such enormous advantage.

Poggi does not promise relief from the contradictions between these two models of the state. We shall no doubt continue to endure the conflict between "shared standards of intrinsic validity" of the collectivist view and the faith that "properly enacted, general rules" (p. 132) will permit reason to flourish. His suggestions in the concluding chapter on how these models have interacted in recent decades might become the basis for some challenging comparative studies. His book will be a useful introduction for anyone concerned with the modern state and is an ingenious linking of theory to the development of modern government.

DOUGLAS E. ASHFORD, *Cornell University*

Pride and Solace: The Functions and Limits of Political Theory.

By NORMAN JACOBSON. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. Pp. xv, 166. \$10.00.)

In a memorable passage in his Inaugural Lecture at the London School of Economics Michael Oakeshott compared political activity to sailing a "boundless and bottomless sea; there is neither harbour for shelter nor floor for anchorage, neither starting-place nor appointed destination. The enterprise is to keep afloat on an even keel." While Jacobson might not accept Oakeshott's prescription for keeping afloat, he would agree with him in denying significance to any transcendent norms for guiding political activity. For both Oakeshott and Jacobson there are not, and can never be, final solutions. Jacobson notes that the philosophers in the great tradition from Plato onward have nonetheless sought proudly to offer such solutions and to commend them to mankind in the form of solace by which life is made acceptable. Three thinkers attempted to provide

this solace during the period of the rise of the modern state. Machiavelli, whose solution was the Prince, Hobbes, who offered the omnipotent sovereign, and Rousseau, who propounded the General Will. In their solutions these theorists sought to achieve an accommodation between man's natural egotism and his need for society on a basis different from, and destructive of, that assumed by their classic predecessors. All three solutions, in Jacobson's opinion, have proven inadequate in the light of subsequent history, and modern man is left to wander on Oakeshott's boundless sea susceptible to the wiles of husksters of political nostrums.

Faced with this situation, thoughtful men have sought a new way to confront realistically the human condition and by accepting its inherent irrationality to come to understand it. In contradistinction to the philosophers of the tradition, Orwell, Arendt, and above all Camus have had in Jacobson's opinion the fortitude to propound a theory of politics without solace, and on this basis to enter into a rational discourse about man and society. This approach involves the recognition of the finiteness of human existence and the acknowledgement of the inevitable tension between man's natural instincts and his quest for community, while avoiding the temptation to escape responsibility by withdrawing into intellectual elitism or cynical indifference. To live as a human being is to appreciate the legitimacy of the conflicting claims and aspirations of others as well as the demands of society, while preserving the essential integrity of one's own individuality and objectivity. As the author states, "the concern of this book is primarily with the struggle to achieve meaning rather than truth"—a challenging undertaking indeed. To assume and maintain such a stance and to apply it in political discourses taxes the capacity of all but the most resolute amongst us.

This then is the theme of Jacobson's book as I see it—a book written in the graceful style of the literary essay, a style which, with few exceptions, has been lacking in contemporary political writings.

In developing his argument Jacobson counterposes the solutions of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau as theorists of pride and solace to the new departure exemplified by Arendt, Orwell, and Camus. In his treatment he displays a delicacy of touch which illuminates both the substance of their arguments and, from a somewhat Freudian point of view, the character of the thinkers themselves. In this respect also the book is both informative and challenging.

While admitting the attractiveness of Jacobson's thesis, one may question whether it can be made operational in our contemporary, post-industrial, mass society. Only a few tough minded souls will be able to cope with the tensions imposed by its radical reassessment of the human condition. Even Camus, as the author notes, could not always maintain his objectivity. It is more likely that the masses will continue to opt for solace and will follow those who offer it. Perhaps, but only perhaps, Jacobson's leaven may penetrate the loaf, in which event we may hope to sail Oakeshott's bottomless ocean with some degree of equanimity.

In sum, a thoughtful and sobering book well worth reading even if, as in the case of this reviewer, one leaves it unconvinced that meaning can be grasped without a foundation in truth, while still agreeing with the author that there are no final solutions, and that solace is a dangerous palliative.

H. MALCOLM MACDONALD, *The University of Texas at Austin*

Christianity and Political Philosophy. By FREDERICK D. WILHELMSEN. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1978. Pp. 243. \$10.50.)

Like Church and State under the influence of liberalism, Christianity and political philosophy have inhabited separate worlds for many decades. I believe that this disjuncture is regrettable, and I would like to recommend Profesor Wilhelmsen's attempt to repair it. Unfortunately, I cannot. Professor Wilhelmsen is a Christian well acquainted with the best of ancient and contemporary political philosophy, so he is certainly equipped to consider Christianity and political philosophy in a scholarly and critical way. His book, however, fails in the main to be such a critical consideration. He acknowledges (p. 8) that the book is partly polemical, but it is actually far more quarrelsome than he would admit, and this prevents the book from being a persuasive argument for the needed repair. The origin of most of the chapters as articles in journals of opinion is fully displayed in their predominately polemical cast, as well as in some distracting editing problems with the footnotes (pp. 95, 115, 220, 230).

Professor Wilhelmsen's ruling purpose is to bring Christian faith