

the poet's touching on universal emotions. While Shelley's romantic egotism may have made a study of his life a necessity; the classical objectivity of Eliot reduces his personal experience to incidental interest. As to the Freudian critics who find the sexual asceticism of *The Waste Land*, and *The Cocktail Party* as evidence of an abnormal man, Kirk replies that a shy man does not necessarily have to be neurotic.

But an argument which has garnered such extreme interest will not be settled by that. It is a well-known fact that Eliot had a tragically unhappy first marriage with Vivienne. What effects could the torments of these early years have had upon Eliot? The question has been asked frequently, and the answer seldom, if ever, satisfactory. At one point, Kirk suggests that it made little difference in his writings. Eliot would have "lamented over the bent world" even if he had married the Hyacinth Girl. "Others, your servant among them," Kirk concludes, "have kept their metaphysics warm even in the company of Cupid and Campaspe." But, this sentence contributes no useful information. It tells us simply that Kirk has a warm and loving family life (which all friends of Kirk know to be true) and that the scholar may be competent at his work and have a loving family as well, which seems to be too obvious a point to have been made. The sentence conveys no meaning, no information, and appears embarrassingly maudlin at that.

Near the conclusion of the book, Kirk touches upon this subject once more. More convincingly, he argues that if Eliot had chosen a loving and understanding wife early, his "literary and

social principles would have been the same." But, he questions whether Eliot would have created *The Waste Land*, *Murder in the Cathedral*, *Four Quartets*, and *The Cocktail Party*. If happily married, his mind would have been as strong, he now suggests, but his "feelings" provided the creative impulse, and his feelings would have been less intense, in brighter circumstances."

In spite of my expressed misgivings with some of the judgments made in the book, I feel that as a whole Kirk has made a major contribution to the literature on Eliot, worthy of the attention of every scholar professing to understand the essence of Eliot's social and literary principles. But more importantly, it is also a book for conservatives who wish to discover the roots of imaginative conservative thinking.

As always, Kirk has maintained a highly readable style throughout this book which I find reminiscent of a variety of writers: Boswell, Johnson, Dickens, Henry Adams, G.K. Chesterton, and because of their obvious philosophical similarities, Eliot (although, I believe his prose to be plainer and therefore more enjoyable to read than the poet's). He has, no doubt, developed one of the most pleasurable prose styles in the English language to read, primarily because of his close attention to these writers throughout his life.

Written by one who knew and loved Eliot, *Eliot and His Age* cannot be closed without the reader feeling, in agreement with the author, that although others might have known Eliot better, Kirk has not "failed to apprehend his character."

W. Wesley MacDonald

## Book Review:

# *The Impudent Snobs*

by John R. Coyne, Jr.  
Arlington House, \$8.95

"I think I'm properly considered a part of the center. Labels are very difficult. I made some judgments in the course of my political career...which have been characterized as flaming liberal. I don't think they were; I think they were sensible. I think some of the things I'm saying now that are compatible with the views of the people who consider themselves very conservative are still sensible."

—Vice President Agnew, 1970  
on *Firing Line*.

A story, privately told by Henry Kissinger, runs as follows. Shortly after the 1968 Republican convention, candidate Richard Nixon gave Henry Kissinger the assignment of "educating" Spiro Agnew. National security affairs, congressional relations and similar areas of topical importance to the technically complete vice president would be "spoon fed" to Mr. Agnew by Hollywood's most famous professor. Early in the semester, in late

August, Professor Kissinger declared his pupil to be profoundly unprepared for the course work because of previous inexperience with the curriculum. A month after the election, after four months of study, Kissinger revised his earlier criticism thus: The Vice President is the fastest learner I have ever met.

While most men formally prepare themselves for the vice presidency before coming to Washington, Mr. Agnew started reading only after his arrival. And while most vice presidents bide their time covertly running for president and flirting with the labor and press aristocracies, Vice President Agnew has concentrated on perfecting his knowledge of statecraft and mastering the native languages of Washington, D.C. He is fast becoming one of the most well read of America's public servants.

Almost as many people misunderstand John Coyne's excellent book on the Vice President as join Henry Kissinger in

wrongly pegging the Vice President. As Coyne explains in a letter to *National Review*, June 9th, correcting an uncharacteristically shoddy review of Coyne's book by Neal Freeman, *The Impudent Snobs* is not purported to be a biography of the Vice President — in-cognito or otherwise. It deals with Spiro Agnew's ninety-four most important speeches (the texts of which are included in an appendix) and the various reactions to them (reported by Coyne in a 171 page introduction) For all the charges of rhetorical genocide enthusiastically made by media types against these speeches (which Eric Hoffer has described as the only consistently thoughtful commentaries proffered by a living American politician), Coyne offers an impressive empirical rebuttal and more. Conjunctive analysis uniting his introduction provides a portrait of the man ritualistic liberals and even some conservatives relegate to "All in the Family" status.

In April, 1968, Governor Agnew reprimanded a group of Black community leaders by reminding them that it is wrong to throw bombs at innocent civilians. The press has never forgiven him. On Bill Buckley's *Firing Line*, a few years ago, the Vice President confessed that he did not belong to the Philadelphia Society, and some young conservative colleagues of mine have privately burped "Betrayal" ever since. At a time when Ph.D. candidates in economics actually receive their union cards without ever having heard of Von Mises, even Milton Friedman is supporting the election of the New Keynesian, while the Vice President has expressed "grave misgivings" over FAP and a Generation of Deficits — misgivings which he is unable to articulate publicly because of his office. Still, many libertarians of various creeds either sneer at the Agnew name or in some cases, they are supporting the Free Enterprise ticket of McGovern (e.g., The Pennsylvania leaders of the late S.I.L. are tanstaafling it at McGovern headquarters). Orthodox Randist friends of mine bow to Saint Ayn's endorsement of Nixon, but they express to me their "rational" contempt for a vice president who does not include the Virtue of Selfishness in his speeches.

Though one may read all of the available biographies of Agnew, only in Coyne's book can one put the choo-choo train of lifeless statistics concerning where, why, and how the Vice President was born into true perspective, thus allowing a glimpse of the man President Nixon might never let us see. (After Vice President Agnew appeared on "The David Frost Show" in 1969, the White House was besieged by letters from viewers who professed astonishment over what they called Agnew's "humane and intelligent" nature which, though known to Agnew, was unknown to viewers accustomed to seeing an insensitive vice president eating students for breakfast. The President, upon learning of the broadcast in which the Vice President did not feign fire-eater, was greatly disturbed. He must never be allowed to get onto something like that Frost Show again, snapped the President "He must be my hammer.")

Agnew, better than Nixon or any other political figure, is the authentic product of and spokesman for the Silent Majority, the productive middle of our country without which our nation might be little bigger than Iceland and as productive as India during the cow season. He is not a card carrying conservative or a liberal and has never pretended to be. Like the majority of Americans, he does not operate as an ideological agent. Those who are closest to him, however, note a dominant and growing conservatism in his nature, one which reflects the waxing social conservatism in the American population.

It is important to understand that this so-called conservatism of the Vice President, one which expresses itself two out of three times politically (e.g., pro-Nixon on Federal Health Insurance, but anti-FAP and anti-China), is fundamentally social. That is, it is in correlation with sentiments by the Silent Majority, emphasis on individual reliance and initiative, the right to privacy (i.e., as challenged by compulsory busing, abortion, the drug culture, Zero Population Growth, Skinnerites, etc.), patriotism, the role of religion, societal order, and the preservation of more than a mere vestige of our republican political system is important to most Americans, and it is important to Agnew. Not because he read it in *National Review*! Not because a president asked him to perform in return for political gifts! But because these values have become a part of him! Unlike young Richard Nixon, young Tec Agnew had no intention of being president of the United States. His adventures as a young man are more akin to the typical stories of hard working, "regular," growing Americans than the President's strictly-confined, Quaker upbringing of self-imposed isolation from his adolescent peers. This is not to cast judgment on either, but only to mark the difference in the two so that we may compensate for differences in the two men, respectively.

Agnew is Middle America's Man in Washington, a Middle America vividly drawn by Coyne's recognition of its most prominent non-members: Pro-

fessor Charles Reich (*The Greening of America*), totally "cloistered in the academy," composing uninformed sappy books so that he may win membership in The Kids, Daniel Ellsberg, the agent of pure Emotion in search of his personal Calvary, carrying his wooden cross and floodlights up the steep stage en route to the nearest street corner to set up shop. Robert MacNamara, the Agent of Pure Intellect, the Fleshy Computer who, in the tradition of the true Rationalist, is only capable of making politics as the crow flies. The garden variety liberal professor of American literature, "who can't write a novel and, therefore, hates Ernest Hemingway," and who can't love his country and, therefore, hates Spiro Agnew. And the elitism of media men who hold disdain for those who cannot eat wine-soaked luncheons at *San Soucis*. The Gary Wills variety of disdain of those who find it offensive that the American workingman simply can't seem to stay in the place they would like to assign him." Explains Coyne, "When my first book appeared, I remember that Gary Wills, in a killer review, called me a 'hard-hat with a degree.' I found this phrase, and the attitude which informed it, particularly offensive, for I was proud of the fact that I came from a working-class family, that I had also been a hard-hat, and that I managed to earn a couple of degrees. This would not have been possible in most of the countries in Europe, for instance, or at least not nearly as easy. But the reaction wasn't so much personal. The important thing in Wills' statement seemed to me to be the underlying assumption that somehow it was wrong for a hard-hat to earn a college degree." (p. 129)

But Gary Wills, like most elitists, is not of this world. He believes that he is a reincarnation of Dr. Samuel Johnson, his professed hero, living in the world he imagines Dr. Johnson living in, the world of Miniver Cheevy, the world of Kurt Vonnegut's Tralfamadore. However, millions of Americans—most of them, in fact, live in a place called the real world. And they have a hero too. And his name is Agnew.

Ronald F. Docksai

## Book Review:

# Things to Come

by Herman Kahn and B. Bruce-Biggs  
Macmillan Co., \$6.95

B. Bruce-Biggs, a lecturer at the Hudson Institute, and Herman Kahn, Director and lecturer at the Institute, have produced a book which continues in the strain of the Kahn tradition. Kahn is widely recognized as a leading thinker in the field of politico-military strategy, and as a major figure in the "science of futurology." His controversial study, *On Thermonuclear War*, gave physics and mathematics a new relevancy for the political and policy scientist, when Kahn developed deterrence and counter-deterrence strategy to its ultimate, rational and logical end. In a later book, *Thinking*

*About The Unthinkable. The Year 2000*, Kahn's scenarios once again aroused debate among the academic and professional community, both in terms of efficacy, methodology, and application. While the merits and weaknesses of Kahn's arguments found no consensus, no one could deny their heuristic value. The same cannot be said for this latest book.

*Things To Come* offers little new material if a reader is familiar with the heretofore mentioned books and *The Emerging Japanese Superstate*. Kahn offers an excellent example in how a

writer can soak his material for all its worth; his first *magnum opus* produced a furor, his latest will not even cause a tremor.

*Things To Come* is a synthesis of Kahn's earlier writings. He covers the long term multifold trend of western culture, based on Pitrim Sorokin's terminology (although not his concepts), i.e. the emergence of a sensate culture. From this the authors proceed into various scenarios, and they offer a case study in methodology in a chapter on Japan; they cover the psycho-sociological, politico-economic, philosophical, and technological development, drawing conclusions and offering projections. (All of which Kahn has done before.) But the areas the authors cover in such brief space is too voluminous to get the attention deserved. The discussion and organization resembles a glob of silly putty, with little coherence. Kahn's books were never meant for the casual reader, and this one is no exception. It also does the author(s) a disservice, since its appeal could only be for a reader seeking an introduction to Kahn. However, a lack of references undermines even this purpose.

In their conclusion, the authors say that man has lost his faith in material progress; this is hardly a startling revelation. Pundits covering the entire philosophical spectrum have drawn upon the same premise, while drawing radically different conclusions. The defrocked priest and Marcusean philosopher, Ivan Illich, has argued that present society resembles Ambrosia, a picture of society with declining hopes and rising expectations, which expected the engineer to increase its satisfaction while reducing its wants; an impossible task, man being what he is. The rise of neo-classical conservatism grew out of similar convictions, i.e., Leo Strauss has argued that widespread nihilism in Western Civilization was the inevitable nemesis of liberalism and philosophical "Conventionalism." But here the similarity ends. Whereas e.g., Illich called for the birth of a new epimethean man, Strauss called for the reawakening of classical values, the belief in natural right.

Kahn and Bruce-Biggs believe that the future can and should be altered normatively, by "varying man." They argue that much has already been attained; since World War II they identify a growing awareness of global community, that the globe is recognizing the need for a *res communis omnium*. Their optimism is, to say the least, debatable. Their perception of the future, however, is based on the premise that "modern man" (they include themselves) share the "contemporary views of scientific 'laws'" and they believe that the future will be eclectic and syncretic. Implicit in this philosophical interpretation seems to be a revival of Positivism, i.e., the birth of a new man who no longer has the need for metaphysics and theology.

Kahn is primarily a scientist and not a philosopher, and he overshadows Bruce-Biggs, the historian. Although the book expresses a concern for values, the tools of the scientist cannot hope to approach grasping, and certainly not answering,