

autos to and from excursions to eat or make love. Filling in the gaps: a bishop who works as the Senechals' gardener, a colonel who insults and is shot by the ambassador, a comely young terrorista who tries to kill but is instead fondled and disarmed (and in the end betrayed) by the ambassador, and other moments light and dark, fabulous and mundane, real or dreamed.

Bunuel slides actuality into and out of fantasy with the sureness of Spitz breast-stroking. He evidently cannot make an error: you will search in vain for a recent movie so true to life in color, set, detail, yet so cleverly ambiguous in delineating the actual and the imagined. On a technical level, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* is, quite simply, perfect. Bunuel's timing is a marvel; each scene takes just enough minutes, no more, no less; each flip from the plausible to the obviously (or is it?) unimaginable (or imagined but unlikely) reveals the orchestrations of a cinema master. An example: the six are invited by the colonel (Claude Pieplu) to his home for dinner. They pull up in their limousines, are ushered into an elegant but faded dining room, there served chicken by a waiter who drops the birds — they bounce — picks them up, plops them on plates — they bounce again — at which point the curtain opens and our friends find themselves on a stage, characters playing before a packed house. From the prompter's well come their lines, which two of the men try to say, as the others slink elegantly off the stage and the audience erupts into catcalls. Flash: it is Thevenot's dream, or is it Senechal's? Never mind. They're next at the real party. Lively guests. The colonel's wife is garrulous and in her way gracious. But the colonel and guests oppress the ambassador, who then pulls a pistol and... And whose dream is that? Next scene.

The story, to repeat, is slight. The message is reed-thin, though insistent: these people are inane, they are coolly vicious, they are pampered and reactionary and ultimately politically Right, that is, wrong. There lies Bunuel's intent, his long-time, again and again repeated intent: the evisceration of that class and that locale along the political spectrum which he detests. He's stacked nearly all the cards against himself, and still wins. We see no starving masses; the terrorista is a gorgeous clod, better suited for the bordello than the barrio; our rich six do not brutalize their servants (though Thevenot calls in the ambassador's driver, offers him a martini, watches the servant gulp it down, tells him he may go, and then makes his point: the lower classes are obviously unimprovable, witness the way the fellow misuses a martini!). In short, Bunuel stands miles above the usual propaganda artist, contrasting his enemies not with his chosen people, the unseen masses, but with his enemies' own

pretensions. It is an ever so much more potent way to drive home a lesson, and should serve as a model for the genre. *The Ruling Class* attempts something similar, but its makers couldn't resist the temptation to show at least some of the actual effects (or perceived effects) of irresponsible wealth on those less favored. But *The Discreet Charm* retains its reserve to the end, to yet another shot of the six friends walking briskly along that country road.

Bunuel's haut bourgeoisie are in his eyes the scum of the earth, albeit so polite, so gay, so charming. It is a notion deserving cinema treatment, as does one that Bunuel will not assay: the masses as lumpish and gross, philistinely ignorant. Were Bunuel's

treatment in this film not so entirely successful, and his now somewhat modulated political thing not so familiar, one might be tempted to rail against his manifest bias. With regard to politicized films, we might paraphrase Wilde: there's no such thing as a moral or an immoral film; films are well-done, or badly done. We take *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* on its own terms, as Luis Bunuel's possibly final statement (he's 72) of a particular world view. Stripped of the message it is elegantly whipped froth; permeated by his thoughts it is satiny smooth and substantial, wrong-minded because incomplete and loaded, but a splendid movie as movie.

David Brudnoy

Book Review:

The Political Culture of the United States

by Donald Devine
Little-Brown, \$7.95

There are several contentions which make up the central purpose of *The Political Culture of the United States* by Donald Devine, a political science professor at the University of Maryland. Complexly interwoven are mutually dependent theses about the history and vitality of America's political culture. To lay the ground for an empirical review of our cultural milieu we are informed that: "culture is a product; is historical; includes ideas, patterns, and values; is selective; is learned; is based on symbols; and is an abstraction from behavior and the products of behavior."

The thesis is that the acceptance of certain political values is essential, without resort to substantial coercion, for "regime maintenance." In simple terms, the population must accept certain political notions which conform with political reality so that the regime does not topple under the impact of internalized stress. It is self-evident that a fundamental and institutional consensus, at least during the formative term of a democratic tradition, be present. Failing that, the United States would be undifferentiated from Latin America and its momentary governments. But we are blessed; we were bequeathed sound republican institutions.

Author's Query

I am studying the life of the not-yet-famous futuristic composer Smyrn Yaffe-Ayrdale, III of Cloverdale, Iowa. I would be grateful if anyone could send me a score to his second trio for whistle, siren, and leg of lamb. I may be reached at my teacher's house in Ithaca, New York. My name is John Dignes.

The question under empirical observation is whether the population continues to believe, in consensual proportions, in those sound republican institutions which Devine instructs are the political products of the "Lockean liberal tradition." That tradition is defined as political attitudes which favor liberty over security, private over public property, personal achievement, the legislative over the executive, and a metaphysical foundation to the order of things. It is not the purpose of this review to question whether the favored attitudes can be properly described as Lockean or not.

Rather I wish to raise certain fundamental questions, not regarding the accuracy of Devine's findings, but regarding Devine's view of the American tradition or condition. There is considerable evidence to justify this questioning. There should be little argument with the beliefs Devine selects for review; the matter which should be considered is whether the tradition as defined tells the whole story. I am afraid that the tradition defined reflects a nineteenth century interpretive revision essentially along economic and "Millian" lines of the nature of the Western tradition in the politics of the American experience. Moreover, the revision has caused considerable harm to the health of our political institutions, for we have been led to an over-emphasis on political freedom and an under-emphasis (perhaps no emphasis at all) on personal duty and apolitical things.

When modern political and economic institutions emerged around the sixteenth century, they came upon the firm moral foundation of medieval experience. The early America was founded on basic religious and moral notions, even though Adam Smith was the fad of the day.

While Locke may have been quoted by certain political leaders, people lived by certain inherited norms not necessarily consistent with either the new economics or politics. I do not mean to single out Locke as *the*, or even a subservice influence, but to make the point that people, leaders and followers alike, may say one thing, but do something entirely different. In other words, we must analyze the event, more than the rhetoric.

This is what I see to be the central problem with the thesis as Devine has apparently developed it. While not presently undertaking a review of the strengths of our political culture — and I am convinced there are some, as Devine most assuredly is convinced there are many — I do question the effectiveness and soundness of an analysis of the population's attitudes on certain selected beliefs. The empirical analysis of actions by modern Americans might produce an entirely different picture regarding the health of this nation's politics. Politics is, however, derivative, and one who would analyze its condition must also go to the primary sources, moral conviction and cultural habit.

There are also other problems which go to the heart of the method. At any certain time in history, especially in a day when empty notions are fed to the young through public schooling and electronic media, all too often there are highly generalized myths which only the most outrageous among us would not support, like apple pie, for instance. In analyzing polls, these myths often appear undifferentiated from the society's basic and real symbols, moral and political. Further, certain of these myths as publicly expressed have a tendency to change from day to day. For instance, polls cited by Devine regarding popular attitudes toward the "openness" of government are flatly contradicted by Louis Harris' poll published in June 19, 1972. According to Harris, the American population is alienated from both itself and its government. Yet these results turned up after repeated articulation by the "two Georges" and the chic media.

This is not to say that there is not value in empirical public opinion analysis. To the contrary, it is a helpful device, albeit incomplete. It is a word, not *the* word. It is secondary and supportive of sound analysis of institutions, actions, and conditions. It is dangerous to contend that a general political hypothesis can be either accepted or rejected on the basis of opinion data, which is at best less than reliable.

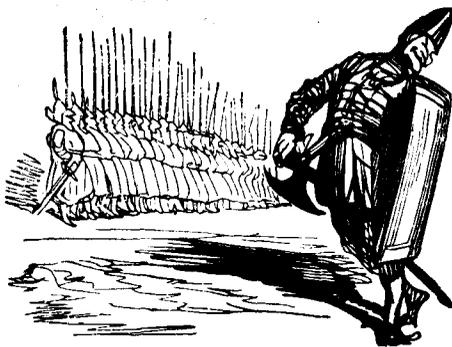
Before making a final point regarding the book's stated thesis, I should like to digress to Devine's contention, strongly stated outside the pages of this book, that the political problems now faced by the United States are essentially problems with our elite. Those who are in positions of power and authority, public or private, whether by achievement or inheritance, are out of step with the American people. It is within this elite that America's problems lie, although not necessarily exclusive to them.

Certainly no one could reasonably contend otherwise. Except that is only

half the story. America's elite are our political and moral leaders. It does no good to contend that the body is healthy if the brain has become addled. Health among the elite and the body politic is essential.

To admit that America's leadership is sick, as it is, is to say that America is floundering. Our religious institutions are in decay, to the point that a recent youth crusade for Christ looked more like a fascist rally than a gathering of young people seeking theological understanding and moral guidance. Our political leaders are either so pragmatic as to be worthless or they are committed to aiding the forces of disintegration. Business has come to be dominated by manager-bureaucrats whose lack of creativity is considered a virtue and whose methods of control are frustrating and boring. The academy whose commitment is supposed to be to quality has become vulgar and political to the point that the SDSers have a point, even if their suggestions were an extension and magnification of the problem.

Restated, there are deep problems amongst America's elite. As we indict



our elite, we must also indict our future in-as-much as today's elite bequeath that future. This may well be the case even though the nation's non-elite are healthy in attitudes and actions, as Devine demonstrates. No doubt there would be reason for greater hope if just the reverse were true. The mission of educating the elite would seem to be infinitely more difficult. Is it not definitionally impossible for the non-elite to be missionaries for the elite?

There is, of course, the chance that through flexibility and social mobility, today's elite will be replaced. The questions are 1) whether our overly-bureaucratized society is as mobile as it once was; 2) whether the new elite will come about because it has rejected current trends or because it has adopted and perfected them.

There are signs of promise. But much depends on a young and dedicated counter-elite pursuing principle as vigorously as most of our politicians pursue power, seeing their earthly mission as one in part committed to changing the course of events.

Finally, the point must be made that much of what America supports (e.g., federalism, legislative superiority, local option, constitutional government) no longer exists. Devine has convinced me that Americans support these basic sym-

bols of American politics. He has also convinced me that I should question the integrity of those institutions till favored. Consider the conditions of federalism.

Those reviewing the "political culture of the United States" sociologically can demonstrate that the American body politic enthusiastically supports federalism. However, it can also be demonstrated that there is no longer any such thing. America's division of powers between local (state) and national authorities is today more fiction than fact. To be sure, there are some exceptions. Under today's federalism there can be no lingerers, which is to say there is no federalism. The collapse of federated responsibility is not totally a matter of a federal power grab. The states, very often for utilitarian political motives, beg the national government to do this or that for them. In the face of an emergency the governors from Virginia to New York organized a meeting after the June floods to figure out what they could do to get federal assistance quicker than would normally be expected. In politics and finance, state welfare has gotten out of control, and governors are unwilling to turn off the spigot or raise taxes, so they actively seek to have the Big Fed come to the rescue. The final chapter on federalism will be written (it is half so already, thanks to grants-in-aid) when revenue sharing turns the states into the mere administrative agencies they will become when money flows from Washington. Federalism died, not because it wasn't a good idea or one which did not work well. It died because our intellectual and political elite determined it expendable for political purposes.

And yet the American public supports federalism? Well, they support the tradition. So would Birch Bayh. But substantively there is no federalism, and herein lies the real problem with empirical, opinion-oriented analysis. It is more important to study whether the opinion is correct, not simply whether it exists. It is more important to study the health of the institution, its values and deficiencies. And it is more important that we know what is, not what some think conditions are.

The central thesis of *The Political Culture of the United States* is that the American people support the "Lockean liberal" tradition, as Devine defines it. They probably do. But in the world of politics, power, and policy I don't think it matters all that much.

Dan Joy

Author's Query

I am doing work in the Russian Archives and would appreciate any reader sending me a small chisel, an ax, and several sticks of dynamite.

Ivan Rasppaspasp, Ph. D.
Russian Archives
Moscow, U.S.S.R. 47302



*"Whom the gods destroy
they first make mad"— Euripides*

Current Wisdom

THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

The illustrious president of Yale University, Dr. Kingman Brewster, magisterially announces the needs of his children:

As we approach the bicentennial of the Republic, perhaps what we need most for 1976 is a resounding Declaration of International Interdependence. Maybe by 1987 we could then celebrate the two hundredth year of the Constitution of the United States with at least the beginning of global arrangements and institutions to safeguard the common defense and the general welfare of humanity everywhere. Then we could rediscover the sense of purpose, and once more know the satisfaction, of making them into a nation. We, in our turn, might save the peoples of nations by making them into a world community capable of survival.

—*Foreign Affairs*

ETHNIC AWARENESS

From *Time Magazine*, journalism's equivalent to the dime store, comes word of yet another delirious episode in the fight against racism. Another color barrier falls:

Previous winners of the "Black Man of the Year Award" have been Chicago Bears running back Gale Sayers and comedian Dick Gregory. The award presented by Holy Angels' parish in a black area of Chicago's South Side honors outstanding contributions to the race. The current Black Man of the Month: George O'Hare, a Sears, Roebuck executive who was awarded the plaque for his work with the late Martin Luther King, Jr. in Chicago and his efforts to improve education and other conditions in the city's ghettos. The fact that O'Hare is white did not trouble the parish. Said Pastor George Clements: "Blackness is a way of life, not merely a skin color."

—*Time*

QUESTION GIRL

Responding to the metaphysical inquiry "What's your idea of a Romantic Evening?" Miss Cheryl Kelton, Indiana University student, provides a fascinating glimpse into the mind of a cosmopolitan girl:

It's like when you go out to eat. I live in Illinois and there's this one restaurant where it's all candlelight and it's just gorgeous. There's this plush carpeting, too. Then after dinner you can go to a concert and then to a few bars after that, and then you go back to the room. This is going to sound funny, but then you have anchovies and crackers and wine.

—*Bloomington Courier-Tribune*

RAW FLESH

Shocking revelations by the New England Anti-Vivisection Society concerning the brutalization of American school children. Come home, America!

Both boys and girls in elementary schools receive scientific assignments in their biology classes that frequently entail vivisection of live frogs, mice, and even rabbits, who writhe under the inept scalpels wielded by childish hands.

It is a fact that less than one percent of the children performing these operations will ever enter medical school. Why then, must the overwhelming majority of young students be subjected to this cruel strain on their conscience?

More important, the cultivation of callous indifference to suffering can be emotionally upsetting to the young mind by participating in the harming or killing of God's lesser creatures. Experiments which result in considerable pain foster an improper regard for animal life and an unbalanced view of biology in the immature mind.

A proper regard for *all* lesser animals is instinctive in a young child and the teaching of abnormal conditions before the student has a sound grasp of normal physiology is against common sense and does not enhance scientific education.

—*New York Times*

MINISTER DOWN THE STREET

The indefatigable Arthur Schlesinger, M.A., brings us more Good News about the unbelievable George McGovern:

McGovern is simply not a believable radical, nor do voters, once exposed to him, perceive him as a menace to society. He comes on not as a bomb thrower, but as an old-fashioned American idealist of a traditional sort — the minister down the street or the teacher across the block; moreover, as a practical idealist who can pilot bombers, win Distinguished Flying Crosses, build party organizations, distribute farm surpluses abroad and win elections.

—*The New York Times Magazine*

THE GRAPES OF WRATH

Using the esoteric rhetoric of the New Democratic Party, Senator Kennedy addresses Mexican-Americans, and reveals the villainy afoot at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue:

Assailing President Nixon, Senator Kennedy said that Mr. Nixon "took pride in eating grapes" and ordered enough lettuce to feed the army for two years. "We know where he stands."

—*Associated Press*

AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

In a recent interview, television's old master, Chet Huntley, fretted about how his medium had become "overly obsessed with the negative story — with tragedy, despair, and failure." We need to talk about what is right with America — so he proceeded to catalogue some of the rosier things he sees in the Republic. Ah, the intellectuals of the air waves!

The anxieties are eating away at us. We're not the self-confident nation we were after World War II. This damn war has demonstrated to us that we can't have our way, even militarily, all the time. We're going to have to bite the bullet and admit that we were virtually defeated.

The cities are getting worse and people are in despair over it.

Congress just has to reform itself or people are going to turn away in disgust.

A lot of people are in despair about our environment. I don't think there's any reason to be. If we spend the money we can clean this country up.

Many of the nation's best plans have become distorted. Welfare is a noble concept but suddenly the nation has found it is a way of life for several millions of persons.

The labor movement that was once a bright and noble concept forty years ago is a disappointment. It seems to me a lot of the organized leadership is pretty bad.

We're tragically short of outstanding political leadership right now. I'm confident that it will come along, but for some strange reason, we haven't had it recently.

—*The Chicago Daily News*

VARIETIES OF HISTORY

Noted historian, Tom Seligson, testifies to the stupendous achievements of our pop youth, the brightest generation since Attila's:

And as James Dean represented the young of the fifties with his unarticulated lack of ease and his alienation, Manson and Sirhan, with their social bitterness and criminal rebellion, signify the mood of the contemporary youth.

—*Evergreen Review*