

ing criticism is especially needed in a time when critical standards and cultural values are under heavy attack, when change and innovation are upon us everywhere. If a critic can do nothing but warn of lost bearings and wrong directions, while at the same time instancing the moral infirmities of any human situation in which rights replace obligations, he is fulfilling his function." I would add only that the critic must also be alive to those aspects of modern thought that have made it both viable and attractive. The sensitive and sensible critic must acknowledge that part of himself that is attracted to modernism, to the advantages and powers it offers him. There are reasons that this tradition has survived and achieved ascendancy. The critic alive to this struggle within himself will find, as Panichas himself says, that "his critical reports are reports about the struggle that rages in the world—and in himself." Such reports, if they assess candidly both sides of this struggle, may truly offer us—as Panichas so often does in this book—something that we can care about. cc

Thomas Eisele makes his first appearance in *Chronicles*.

## Signs of Life

by Clyde Wilson

William C. Havard: *The Recovery of Political Theory: Limits and Possibilities*; Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.

The ancient Western tradition of political thought, appropriate to men seeking freedom and virtue in community, has in our century been hounded into obscure corners by materialists and romantic revolutionaries. Yet, here and there, the tradition remains alive and even shows signs of a renewed vitality.

One such sign is the work of William C. Havard, professor of political science at Vanderbilt University and former president of the Southern Political Science Association, some of whose occasional articles have been here collected. Havard's work is impressive in two respects. First, it offers a critique of the reigning "value-free" empiricism of academic political science. Havard subjects this misguided orthodoxy not only to the rigors of philosophy but also to the lash of satire, as in the hilarious essay on "The New Lexicon of Politics: or, How to Engage in Research Without Really Thinking."

The second notable virtue of Havard's approach is that it links him to his comrades-in-arms. This linkage is acknowledged in two exceptional essays on "The Politics of *I'll Take My Stand*" and on the underappreciated Michael Oakeshott. Two other pieces pay homage to the late Eric Voegelin, Havard's teacher and friend. In all, Havard's book is a treasure of broad learning and common sense. cc

Clyde Wilson is editor of *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* and professor of history at the University of South Carolina.

## Reagan's Rhetoric

by Christopher Muldor

*The Triumph of the American Spirit: The Presidential Speeches of Ronald Reagan*; Edited by Emil Arca and Gregory J. Pamel; National Reproductions; Detroit.

It may well be indicative of real progress in America that we are now able to read the Presidential speeches of a man that leading commentators frequently declared unelectable a decade ago. But now that Ronald Reagan's electability is established beyond doubt, the national media have been busy tagging him as the "most ideological" of Presidents. The ordinary citizen, vaguely uncomfortable in a world of instant analyses that he never made, might just welcome the opportunity to examine, without prejudice, the ideas and beliefs of Mr. Reagan. Fortunately, Emil Arca and Gregory J. Pamel have compiled a cross section of the President's addresses, one that covers most of the major issues and themes of Reagan's Presidency.

The alleged ideological rigidity of Reagan turns out, upon examination, to consist of little but a realism concerning the failed ideologies of the 60's and 70's. The initial optimism of the Great Society—the belief that every wrinkle in the human condition could be ironed out through government programs—gave way by the late 70's to "malaise," the nagging suspicion that government could hardly function at all. During that period, new "rights" were constantly being discovered for the unproductive, the antisocial, and the bizarre; Federal programs and intrusions grew apace. In contrast, national defense was neglected, since détente committed the country to a quiet acceptance of aggressive Soviet behav-

ior in exchange for pleasant Soviet rhetoric.

Ronald Reagan is consistent in excoriating the policies and mentality that turned the prosperous and strong America of 1960 into the severely weakened America of 1980. Reagan's appeal is not so much to ideology as to common sense; his injunction is to "look at the record," as Al Smith would have said. National security is the first priority of the Federal government; poverty was being successfully fought so long as a growing economy, low inflation, and consistent increases in productivity were the rule; violence and lack of parental involvement are antithetical to education; the Soviet Union is an evil empire.

Despite Reagan's frequent attacks on big government, though, in practice he is the defender of a remarkable amount of governmental activity in the domestic arena. The "safety net" is a prime example. Even if domestic spending was reduced at once by some \$200 billion annually—a politically "unthinkable" suggestion—it would still be triple 1960 domestic spending in real, after-inflation terms.

Rhetoric is important. If some people believe that Reagan wants to return the nation to the Coolidge era, the reason is partly that he sometimes sounds as if he would like to do so, even though he intends nothing of the sort. Sooner or later, one suspects, conservative Americans will have to deal with the incongruence of political rhetoric reminiscent of *The Road to Serfdom* and of persistent defense of a variety of liberal programs and initiatives.

To be sure, the Reagan Administration has effected a dramatic reduction in the inflation rate and a rejuvenation of the military. Still, there is room for doubt over whether America is standing as tall in the 80's as some of the President's speeches suggest. Federal outlays still consume a larger share of the Gross National Product than they did under Carter, and, even with the increase in defense spending (now sputtering to a halt), that spending is only 15 percent higher in real-dollar terms now than it was 30 years ago. Despite today's reputedly conservative climate, many Americans seem incapable of grasping the nature of the Soviet threat, as evidenced by the "shock" at Reagan's evil empire speech.

These Presidential addresses will certainly not settle the question of whether a realignment of the American political spectrum is taking place. They do, though, present us with something for which we can all be grateful: the return

of some measure of reason, civility, and common sense to our politics after one of the more dismal periods in American history. cc

*Christopher Muldor is a criminologist in Philadelphia.*

## Smashing "Ugly Monuments"

by David Vicinanzo

Mortimer J. Adler: *Ten Philosophical Mistakes*; Macmillan; New York; \$12.95.

Adler begins his latest book with Aristotle's admonition: "The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousandfold." Adler concludes with a recommendation: "The recovery of basic truths, long hidden from view, would eradicate errors that have such disastrous consequences in modern times." For 10 delightfully lucid chapters in between, he uncovers and corrects the "initial deviations" that have generated the contemporary short-circuit in philosophical thinking.

Consider Locke's postulate that an "idea" is *that which* the individual apprehends, instead of *that by which* the individual apprehends some object." If we take Locke's theory seriously, then the bottle of wine between us on the

dinner table is not real, but "an idea in our minds." Locke did not even need common sense to discover his error; he could have consulted Aquinas, who, good Dominican that he was, had demonstrated that the wine was real, and that ontological teetotalism such as Locke's prohibited "the possibility of our having any knowledge of a reality outside . . . our own minds." Still, many *have* taken Locke's notion seriously and its tangled outgrowths—skepticism, subjectivism, and solipsism—prevail today.

Consider also the assertion of Hobbes, Berkeley, and Hume that the human mind is a mere "sense-perceptor." As a purely sensitive faculty, Adler says, the mind would not have any abstract ideas. Man could not apprehend the objects of mathematics, nor conceive metaphysical objects such as God or the soul, nor converse about such abstractions as liberty, justice, virtue, and the infinite: "None of these can be perceived by the senses. None is a sensible particular." But of course men *can* conceive of such things (even Locke conceded that "Brutes abstract not"); the intellect—the part of the mind that does not simply receive and react to sensation—is one great attribute that makes us different *in kind*, not just degree, from other animals. Nonetheless, the mistaken view of the human mind persists, undermining individual responsibility and making human life less inviolable and—the shame of the 20th century—more expendable.

In correcting other mistakes, Adler applies special scrutiny to Hume and Kant, whose works represent opposite faces of the same error: the definition of "knowledge" as exclusively the product of methodical investigation and probative data. By this definition, philosophy and metaphysics are discounted as mere "opinion," and "real knowledge" becomes the possession of specialists who progressively insulate their microcosmic subjects from the corpus of knowledge and the experience of the human race. Philosophy and the collective experience of mankind, Adler argues, ultimately are more essential to human existence than the germ-free bubble of the "expert"; without them, we are unable to understand everything else we know, and the path to happiness and wisdom lies dark and untraveled.

In the latter half of the book, Adler addresses less esoteric mistakes, such as the "astounding, yet in our days widely prevalent, denial of human nature." Adler wonders, too, how the human race survived long enough for Hobbes,

Locke, and Rousseau to invent the "state of nature" and "social contract" theories if the family and rudimentary society are not "natural."

Adler insists that the philosophical mistakes are simple ones and that their proliferation is the result of "culpable ignorance":

They are ugly monuments to the failure of education—failures due, on the one hand, to corruption in the tradition of learning and, on the other hand, to an antagonistic attitude toward or even contempt for the past, for the achievements of those who have come before.

The solution is to reopen the philosophical classics of pre-17th-century Western civilization, which have answers that a shallow and dissipated contemporary philosophy cannot provide. Adler is convinced that these landmarks will help us to undo the mistakes that promote needless misery in modern times. cc

*David Vicinanzo is a recent graduate of Fordham Law School.*

## IN FOCUS

### TRUTH in Green Trousers

by Brian Murray

*Ezra Pound and Dorothy Shakespeare: Their Letters: 1909-1914*; Edited by Omar Pound and A. Walton Litz; New Directions; New York.

When the young American poet Ezra Pound arrived in London in the autumn of 1908, he had considerably more on his mind than a tour of Westminster Abbey and a boat ride down the Thames. He was determined to become a noted poet, and—convinced that his own country was little more than a cultural slum—he had come to England to launch his career. In London, Pound put in long hours: he wrote incessantly and lectured often; he sought out all the right connections. In little more than a year, Pound had managed to form friendships with such prominent literary figures as Elkin Mathews, Maurice Hewlett, Ernest Rhys, and William Butler Yeats.

Pound was introduced to Yeats by Mrs. Olivia Shakespeare, the wife of a prosperous London solicitor and a

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