

## REVIEWS

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SCIENCE AND GOVERNMENT. By C. P. SNOW. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1961. Pp. vi, 88. \$2.50.

It will require an extraordinary act of grace if anyone who *should* manages to take Sir Charles Snow seriously. For he is in the clutches of the Society-for-Cutting-Intellectuals-Down-to-Size and the Movement for the Trivialization of Knowledge. If they maintain their grip, he will be permanently removed from both the scientific and literary cultures (which he identified in *The Two Cultures*), and exclusive membership in the *kitsch* culture will be conferred upon him.

Consider the trend. His novels have become huge sellers. Discussion of the salience of his ideas is shunted aside as audiences are invited to hail the mid-twentieth century Renaissance man: scientist *manqué*, creative writer, Fellow of Cambridge, Civil Service Commissioner, director of the English Electric Company, counsellor on educational programs, literary critic, distinguished visitor to Russia and America, husband of Pamela Hansford Johnson, Knight. His speeches in the United States are reported in the *New York Times* under headlines usually reserved for cabinet ministers or celebrities from the world of entertainment who have discovered that the time has come for the United States to assert LEADERSHIP and assume RESPONSIBILITY. Like a venerable statesman, he is invited by the Harvards to deliver the Godkin Lectures (published under the title of *Science and Government*). The Yales also have flocked to his addresses. His platform performances, with the assistance of audio-visual aids, are repeated over educational TV stations. He has served as Regents Professor of English at the University of California. A political scientist has delivered a paper on *The Masters*, one of the novels in Snow's *Strangers and Brothers* sequence, before a session of his professional society—complete with the paraphernalia of social science jargon.<sup>1</sup> And Snow himself, apparently in an effort to publicize plans for the establishment of Churchill College at Cambridge, has answered empty questions on a commercial television network.<sup>2</sup>

In the face of such formidable evidence, can one soberly argue the case for Snow?

At the outset, let us concede that Snow has violated the code of proper conduct for post-World War II intellectuals. He records stabbing insights with utter lucidity in his novels. He suffers from no passion for symbolic

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1. Address by Merle Kling, "C.P. Snow's Image of the Political Process: *The Masters*," American Political Science Association Convention, 1960.

2. *Accent*, July 16, 1961.

obscurantism. He competes with social scientists in attempts to gauge the directions of social change. He advocates public policies without the cumbersome philosophical luggage carried by existentialists to rationalize their "engagements." He blandly acknowledges the inevitable tragedy of death for each individual and then calmly proceeds to accept, without semantic convolutions, the reality of social progress. He is the despair of those who make a cult of despair.

And yet, he has observed clearly, thought deeply, and written, if one may borrow from the Hemingway legacy, truly. Without discarding the values of poise and balance, he has insisted upon the unconscious and rampantly irrational springs of human behavior, specifically political behavior. Whether probing the motivations of a wealthy Jewish family in England (*The Conscience of the Rich*), or the vacillations of allegiance among parties to a struggle for academic office (*The Masters*), or the conflicts among scientists engaged in both "high" and "low" politics (*The New Men* and *The Affair*), he regularly touches the earth of individual personality in order to account for critical decisions. As he suggests in *The Light and the Dark, Time of Hope and Homecoming*, there are severe limits to the capacities of men to forestall the tragic fates which they carry buried well beneath the surface of their personalities. It is no shallow optimism or naive faith in human nature which separates him from the author of *Lord of the Flies*.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, he is fascinated by the *process* of politics. There has been no dearth of writers who have portrayed officeholders and conveyed social messages in their fiction. What distinguishes Snow is his sustained concern with the motivations and techniques of men who compete for power and influence. In his fictional mill, he grinds—with exceeding fineness, let it be noted—the standard grist of political analysis: leadership, parties, rules of the game, propaganda, campaigning, decision-making. (*The Masters*, therefore, may be considered as a *political science novel* rather than as a *political novel*). Although a forthcoming novel, *The Corridors of Power*, is supposed to focus this interest directly on the arena of "macrocosmic" or "official" politics, his preoccupation thus far has been mainly with "microcosmic" or "closed" politics. But certain common traits characterize the process of politics at all levels. As he put it in *The New Men* and repeated in the Godkin Lectures:

These men were fairer, and most of them a great deal abler, than the average: but you heard the same ripples below the words, as when any group of men chose anyone for any job. Put your ear to those meetings and you heard the intricate, labyrinthine and unassuageable rapacity, even in the best of men, of the love of power. If you have heard it once—say, in electing the chairman of a tiny dramatic society, it does not matter where—you have heard it in colleges, in bishoprics, in minis-

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3. A harrowing novel by William Golding (New York: Coward-McCann, 1955) which depicts, in the form of a parable about children isolated on an island, the ease with which the inhibitions of civilization are abandoned.

tries, in cabinets: men do not alter because the issues they decide are bigger scale.<sup>4</sup>

In *Science and Government*, after noting that "there is a great deal in closed politics which is essentially the same in any country and in any system," he offers a taxonomic scheme of closed politics. (By "closed politics" he means "any kind of politics in which there is no appeal to a larger assembly"). For he recognizes three types of closed politics: committee politics (in which there is nominal equality among members with authority to reach decisions), hierarchical politics (in which a formal chain of command is likely to disguise the complexities of organizational decision-making), and court politics (in which there is an attempt "to exert power through a man who possesses a concentration of power. The Lindemann-Churchill relation is the purest example possible of court politics.") In closed politics generally, according to Snow, "personalities and personal relations carry a weight of responsibility which is out of proportion greater than any they carry in open politics."

Finally, Snow links a significant model of social change to his chain of interests in personality and politics. Both in *The Two Cultures* and *Science and Government*, he portrays modern industrialized societies (Western or Eastern, Capitalist or Communist) as singularly dependent upon the expertise of the scientist in order to maintain and expand their technological foundations and political power. The "new men" (of science)—less rapidly in the West than in Russia—have replaced the manipulators of words in the "corridors of power," with the consequence that members of the literary and scientific cultures find themselves in a state of tense misunderstanding. Members of the literary culture in particular, having failed to master the minimum fund of technical knowledge required to cope with the world created by science, increasingly are subject to fits of frustration and bewilderment. The scientist is in the ascendant, and narrow adherents to the literary culture, Snow regrets, neither adequately appreciate nor internalize the meaning of this dramatic shift of power.

Underlying Snow's plea for the integration of larger numbers of scientists into the organs of government is the belief that they—uniquely in our time—are blessed with the gift of "foresight." The West is in danger, he claims, because "we are beginning to shrug off our sense of the future." As he explains in *Science and Government*:

. . . We are becoming existential societies—and we are living in the same world with future-directed societies. . . . We seem to be flexible, but we haven't any model of the future before us. In the significant sense, we can't change. And to change is what we have to do.

*That* is why I want scientists active in all the levels of government. . . . It is a clear advantage to the Soviet Union that they have, right at the top of the political and administrative trees, a fairly high proportion of men with scientific or technical training. . . . I believe scientists have

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4. SCIENCE AND GOVERNMENT 59.

something to give which our kind of existential society is desperately short of: so short of, that it fails to recognize of what it is starved. That is foresight.<sup>5</sup>

An Icelandic saga, he recalls, includes the sentence: "Snorri was the wisest man in Iceland who had not the gift of foresight." It is Snow's wish that we should deserve a better epitaph than: "The wisest men who had not the gift of foresight."

The implications of Snow's conceptual apparatus and his projection of current trends may prove distasteful to many, and, perhaps to some, including readers of this *Journal*, alarming. After all, if we subscribe to his version of public conflict, politics ceases to be a contest between the virtuous and the vicious, but the inescapable process by which individuals and groups strive to augment their power in a quest for rewards which are in limited supply. If we concede his premises about motivation, participants in political struggles conceal the unconscious sources of their behavior beneath a conventional veneer of rational argument. If we share his conception of social change, then a drastic reorganization of the form and contents of our educational system is in order. And if scientists indeed are destined to occupy a progressively larger proportion of policy-making posts, what group in the United States is more eligible for displacement than the members of the Bar?

Since Snow's conclusions carry this heavy freight of threat, we have resorted, I suggest, to an explicable, if not courageous, set of defenses. We have sought to domesticate him. With the help of the lecture circuit and colossal publicity, we polish down the abrasive qualities of his thought. We pretend that he represents merely one more party to an ancient rivalry between humanists and scientists. We divert attention from the ideas to the man. We deflect possible consideration of the "cautions" he incorporates in *Science and Government* to a critical preoccupation with the "cautionary story" he relates about the roles of Sir Henry Tizard and F. A. Lindemann (Lord Cherwell) in shaping major British scientific decisions. We, in fact, become absorbed in a discussion of the details and ancillary features of the cautionary tale: Professor R. V. Jones, writing in *The Times* (of London),<sup>6</sup> questions the propriety of washing the linen of a quarrel between British scientists before an American audience, and Snow solemnly defends himself in a letter to the Editor;<sup>7</sup> Admiral Lewis L. Strauss, writing in the *New York Times*,<sup>8</sup> objects to the relevance of Sir Charles's speculation about the possible Jewish origin of Lindemann's father, and Snow, evidently fearful of charges of anti-Semitic insinuations, again responds in a letter to the Editor and directs the Admiral's attention to *The Conscience of the Rich*;<sup>9</sup> R. Watson-Watt, in the pages of the

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5. Pp. 80-81.

6. April 6, 1961, p. 13, col. 6.

7. April 8, 1961, p. 9, col. 5.

8. April 2, 1961, § 7 (Book Review), p. 1.

9. April 23, 1961, § 7 (Book Review), p. 44, col. 3.

*Saturday Review*,<sup>10</sup> challenges Snow's interpretation of the qualities and contributions of the two British scientists, and the debate over the validity of the cautionary tale is continued in a subsequent issue of the magazine.<sup>11</sup> Conceivably, these assorted adjustments, not wholly devoid of subtlety, will conjure the world that Snow professes to see out of existence.

But I doubt it.

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THE IDEOLOGIES OF TAXATION. By Louis Eisenstein. New York: Ronald Press, 1961. Pp. 263. \$5.00.

THOSE who have been fascinated or intrigued by the writings of Thurman Arnold during the past several decades should welcome this book about federal taxation by Louis Eisenstein. It is of the same genre as the works of Arnold. Thus, in broad terms, it charges that most discussions about the policies of federal taxation are "ideologies" designed to conceal from public view the "real issues" and, by implication at least, that only a chosen few fully understand this and are aware of these issues. As Arnold in *The Folklore of Capitalism* explained how "creeds" and "ideals" of institutions are shaped and influenced by social "needs," so Eisenstein in his book traces out how the "ideologies" of taxation serve the practical needs of those who hold them.

In the early part of his book Eisenstein appears to speak forthrightly about the nature of these practical needs. "Our taxes," he says, "reflect a continuing struggle among contending interests for the privilege of paying the least."<sup>1</sup> Only a few sentences later he seems to plunge more deeply into that eternally beguiling sea which is cynicism when he says, "Tax legislation commonly derives from private pressures exerted for selfish ends."<sup>2</sup> Those with common economic concerns become "groups" and "interests" (terms which the author regards as less candid but more flexible and versatile than such old-fashioned designations as "factions" or "classes") which seek to have the tax law serve their "fiscal aspirations."<sup>3</sup> To achieve this end it is necessary for these groups to develop theories which will convince others that the group's "fiscal aspirations" serve the needs of all. These theories become ideologies which to be effective must not only serve selfish ends but also, asserts Eisenstein in his tough-minded way, "convey a vital sense of some immutable principle that rises majestically above partisan preferences."<sup>4</sup> Thus, it seems fair to say that

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10. March 4, 1961, p. 49.

11. April 1, 1961, p. 45.

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1. Pp. 3, 4.

2. P. 4.

3. P. 7.

4. P. 12.