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# MORRIS R. COHEN AND THE LIBERAL TEMPER:

# A PHILOSOPHER'S CONCEPTION OF LIBERALISM

by
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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TO MY DEAR WIFE

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

It is perhaps best to explain what this dissertation is about by using the old rhetorical method of negation, that is, to say first what it is not. In the first place, it is not a comprehensive intellectual biography, although it necessarily contains biographical elements. For a full-scale treatment of Cohen's thought within a biographical framework, the reader is referred to David Hollinger's excellent work, Morris Cohen and the Scientific Ideal.[1]

Secondly, it is not simply a technical analysis of Cohen's philosophy. The technical aspects of Cohen's work have been dealt with in virtually every history of philosophy published in the last thirty years or so, as well as in the full length works, A Theory of Rationalism: An Examination of the Philosophy of Morris Raphael Cohen by Sol Roth[2] and Mind and Nature: A Study of the Naturalistic Philosophy of Cohen, Woodbridge, and Sellars by C. F. Delaney.[3] Nevertheless, to write about the contributions of a philosopher without discussing his philosophy would be tantamount to describing a trip through the Hindu Kush with nary a mention of snow-capped mountains. Accordingly, the reader will find a certain amount of philosophical explication, even though that is not the main focus.

In the third place, the dissertation is not confined simply to a discussion of Cohen's political philosophy, which might be inferred

from the title. This area has also been dealt with, although perhaps not as coherently as it might have been, by Morton A. Kaplan in Some Elements of the Legal and of the Political Philosophy of Morris Cohen.[4]

What, then, is this particular dissertation about? Simply this: I have tried to show that Morris Cohen used philosophy in a unique way to interpret many facets of American culture. The focus is upon the use of philosophy as a method of cultural analysis. It must be borne in mind that this is a dissertation in American Culture, or American Studies, not in philosophy, or history, or political science. Since its inception in the mid-1930's, the American Studies movement has been plagued by the search for method. Howard Mumford Jones, Tremaine MacDowell, Henry Nash Smith, and many other "pioneer" Americanists have written at length about the problem of method, and still the question persists: is there a method that can properly be called the method of American Studies? I believe the answer to this question is a resounding "No!"

One thing that seems to have emerged in the past few years, however, is a certain agreement concerning the goal of American Studies. Today, most Americanists would probably agree that the single, extremely ambitious, goal of American Studies is to understand the whole American experience as fully as possible. Thus, American Studies is necessarily interdisciplinary. It includes the techniques and materials of literary criticism and sociology; history

and political science; philosophy and "pop" culture. Are marriages such as these possible? Perhaps, although they are necessarily stormy ones. But then so are many marriages that manage to survive. And stormy marriages, although sometimes painful, at least have the virtue of excitement.

The point is this: there is no single method of American Studies, and I suspect there never will be one. However, I feel that an analysis such as this--i.e., a philosopher's use of philosophical method as an approach to political issues--can be very valuable in showing a partial solution to the elusive problem of cultural interpretation.

Cohen was a naturalistic philosopher whose journey in philosophy led him to embrace, first, scientific method as an ideal, and secondly, political liberalism as the embodiment of that ideal in men's ordinary affairs. It was a beautiful dream, shared by many in the first half of this century. That the dream, like all dreams, proved to be an illusion is perhaps the most melancholy and significant fact of our time. By the end of his life, Cohen himself knew that the dream--at least in American society--had failed, and he seemed prepared to accept the passing of this civilization. In one of his very last essays, he wrote:

> In the physical realm there is always action and reaction. There is one force acting, but always many forces reacting in opposite directions. So, in life, there is growth and decay. In human history there are ups and downs. There are periods of flowering and periods of decay. There is no

> use, it seems to me, in thinking that any movement in history, or of human life, will continue forever.
>
> So I come back to the notion of Goethe--that if you could say to one moment, "O stay, thou art so fair," that would be the end.[5]

These are the words of a very tired liberal. He does not give in to absolute despair--not quite-- but obviously there is no bubbling optimism for the immediate future. In the dissertation, I first illustrate the major forces that shaped Cohen's life: his childhood in a Russian Ghetto, his training and experience in America, and his long career as teacher and philosopher. I then chart the growth of his naturalistic philosophy, as briefly as possible. In a subsequent chapter, I outline the basics of the liberal temper. I then show how bourgeois liberalism developed as a major force in the Western World, and how welfare liberalism grew up as a reaction to the excesses of bourgeois liberalism. I conclude by placing Morris Cohen in his proper position in the liberal tradition.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. David Hollinger, "Morris Cohen and the Scientific Ideal" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1969).

2. Sol Roth, "A Theory of Rationalism: An Examination of the Philosophy of Morris Raphael Cohen" (Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1966).

3. C. F. Delaney, Mind and Nature: A Study of the Naturalistic Philosophy of Cohen, Woodbridge and Sellars (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969).

4. Morton A. Kaplan, "Some Elements of the Legal and of the Political Thought of Morris Cohen" (Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1955).

5. Morris Cohen, The Faith of a Liberal (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1946), p. 485.

## CHAPTER II

## FLOWERING IN TWO WORLDS

In Morris Cohen's autobiography, A Dreamer's Journey, there is a revealing photograph of the Cohen family taken in New York City about the year 1895.[1] It is a picture typical of the period. The six figures are "composed" properly, emulating the oil portraits of royal families flatteringly immortalized by ambitious court painters of past centuries. There is a romantic backdrop, which upon inspection turns out to be a wispy painting of the middle landscape by a lesser Constable, or, more fittingly for America, an aspiring Thomas Cole. As we would expect in this twilight of the Gilded Age, overstuffed and befringed chairs vulgarly intrude upon Arcadia, and an ornately carved pedestal is conveniently placed for one of the figures to lean his elbow upon. Everybody poses, in this day of agonizingly slow shutter speeds, as stiffly as a family of mannequins behind Mr. Gimbel's sparkling plate-glass windows. In the foreground sits Morris Cohen's heavily bearded father, Abraham, flanked by his diminutive mother, Bessie Farfel Cohen, and his sister, Florence. Behind stand the three boys, Sam, Morris, and Tom. One is immediately struck with the difference in appearance between Morris and his two older brothers. The brothers appear as strong, healthy, and capable men, mustachioed and "masculine" in the 1890's sense of the term. Morris, who is only about fifteen at the time of this photograph,

presents a considerable contrast. In fact, he seems somehow out of place with this solid and respectable looking family. Although he makes an awkward attempt at looking the dandy by indolently hooking his thumb in his vest, he still comes across as dreamy, delicate, almost sickly. But there is about him, even in this ridiculously self-conscious portrait, an unmistakable quality of asceticism, a detached, intellectual air. One knows that this lad--if he does not succumb to tuberculosis or some other horrid disease in the next six months--is destined for a life quite different from that of his more robust brothers. This, of course, is the way it turned out. Sam and Tom followed quite ordinary careers in "trade", while Morris went on to a distinguished life as a philosopher, a teacher of philosophy, and a social critic.

Although the Morris Cohen of this portrait came to maturity in New York, and spent the greater part of his life in that city, he was not a native son. This branch of the oldest priestly family known to man[2] struggled for generations in the harsh environment of White Russia, and there, probably in 1880, Morris Raphael Cohen was born. In order to understand Cohen's interpretations of American life, we must first look back across the sea to his earliest years in Russia.

Because of the demands placed on Jews by Russian law in the nineteenth century--particularly that part of the law which required thousands of Jewish children to be taken forcibly from their parents,

placed in the homes of moujiks (non-Jewish peasants) until they reached maturity, and then compelled to serve in the Czar's brutal army for twenty-five years! --it was customary to manipulate the birth records of male children so they would be difficult to trace.[3] Morris Cohen knew he was born in the district of Minsk, but there was always some question about whether this event took place in 1880 or 1881. In deference to his mother's memory, however, the date July 25, 1880, was finally settled upon as his proper birth date. Thus it was that Morris Cohen was allowed to become Bar-mitzvah in the summer of 1893. The circumstances surrounding this birth date and Bar-mitzvah present some difficulties, however, because they can lead to the conclusion that Cohen was born on the ninth day of Ab, the day commemorating the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the beginning of the Exile. It is also, in some Jewish traditions, the day on which the Messiah is to appear who will lead the Jews back to Israel. Obviously, such a birth date is filled with implications, particularly for the mystically-minded. Cohen's father was devoutly orthodox, and apparently speculated about these curious circumstances from time to time. In later life, when Cohen had risen to a position of prominence in the New York Jewish community, idle speculation about his birth date arose once again. Cohen himself--as a life-long rationalist--always pooh-poohed such speculations about his nativity by saying that the year 1880 was due to his mother's memory and the date, July 25th, he had chosen himself, because it was on that date in

1892 that he, his mother, and his sister, Florence, arrived at Ellis Island to begin life in the New World.[4]

Cohen's memories of his very early childhood in Minsk are a mixture of almost unremitting poverty and sickness punctuated by a few happy incidents, usually associated with religious affairs. The poverty is illustrated in this anecdote:

> I was walking along with my younger sister one day and we passed a house where people in the front room were having their midday meal, at which I looked longingly. I was too ashamed to ask for anything, but I turned to my sister and inquired, "Friedke (Florence), are you hungry?" The mother of the house gave each of us a piece of bread dipped in soup and launched into a tirade against my mother for leaving us alone all day and not providing sufficient food. But the delightful taste of the food prevailed over my indignation at the disrespect to my mother.[5]

There were moments of respite from hunger and labor, however, moments when the spirit, at least, was well fed:

> Just before the recitation of the Havdoleh (the Hebrew prayer which divided the week days from the Sabbath) my mother used to chant a Yiddish prayer beginning, "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," asking God's mercy for the week to come. I can never forget its plaintive notes, nor resist the flow of tears, whenever I hear any echo of it.[6]

From his earliest days Cohen was somehow "different" from other boys. He was, in this time of universal sickness and unbelievably primitive hygienic conditions, sicker and weaker than most--at least sicker and weaker than most of those who survived. He was the subject of bullying attacks by stronger boys and admitted in later life that, "I cannot recall any childhood games that I ever played with

other children."[7] His listlessness and "differentness" led to his being assigned the nickname Kalyeleh, local Yiddish for some sort of half-wit.[8] Although attempts at post mortem psychoanalysis--particularly by people almost totally ignorant of psychiatry--are usually disastrous, it should be pointed out that these early childhood experiences must have had an enormous influence on Cohen's later development. What could a young boy do if he was unable to play games with other children? Cohen was fortunately endowed with the right psychological make-up to find compensation for this most unusual childhood in school work and private study. His earliest schooling was at a cheder in Minsk. It was particularly well calculated to snuff out any spark of intellectual curiosity that might be glowing within the pious young scholars sent there. The boys were endlessly drilled on the minutiae of the Hebrew alphabet, and taught to read by rote from the Hebrew prayer book. Almost never were they allowed to read anything on their own, and corporal punishment was freely administered for the slightest infraction. Cohen's recollection of this first cheder and first rebbeh is most unpleasant. That he did not turn completely away from intellectual pursuits after such an introduction shows how strong his natural proclivity for study must have been.

In 1883, the Cohen family was disrupted by Abraham Cohen's departure for America. This was a common story in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Uncounted thousands of families remained behind while fathers and brothers trudged off to the greener pastures

of America, to earn enough money to return one day, and live in relative luxury, or to prepare a place across the sea for wife and sons and daughters. Oscar Handlin, in The Uprooted, has caught the poignancy of these long and bitter separations by imaginatively re-creating a letter home. Although such letters were usually written by a professional amanuensis, and depended upon standard epithets for much of their style, the pain of separation still glimmers through:

> ...to my dearest...to every him and her who filled the days of the old life...By this letter I kiss you. To the aged parents who bred and nurtured, who took trouble over, shed tears for me and now have none to comfort them; to the brother who shared my tasks and bed; ... to all the kin who joined in festivals; ...to each I send my greetings. And with my greetings go wishes that you may have the sweet things of life, of health, of happiness, alas elusive there and here.[9]

For four long years, Abraham Cohen communicated with his family in letters that must have sounded something like this. He finally returned to Russia in 1887, intending to stay at home, but once again he could not make his way in that brutal environment. After a few weeks with his family, he decided to go back to America. This time he took his two older boys with him. Shortly after this second departure, Morris was sent to live with his maternal grandfather in the town of Neshwies.[10]

In 1887, Neshwies, although a rude and wretched place by many standards, was, like Odessa, a center of Ashkenazic learning and piety. It had been the home of the Jewish philosopher, Solomon

Maimon; of Issac Elkhanon, one of the best-known of the nineteenth century rabbis; and of the author, Shomer (M. M. Shaikewich), who was read by tens of thousands of European Jews and is sometimes called the Dumas of modern Yiddish literature. In Cohen's own time, Dr. Nissem Tourov, who did so much important work in the development of modern Hebrew, and later became a professor of education at Hebrew University, lived in Neshwies.[11]

Cohen continued his studies here, first under his pious grandfather, and later under at least one rebbeh who was a maskil, i.e., a Jewish teacher who believed in enriching Biblical and Talmudic studies by introducing Western learning. It must be remembered that Cohen was growing up during the last stages of the Haskaleh, the Jewish Enlightenment, when all sorts of new ideas were entering the Jewish tradition. It was at Neshwies that Cohen's innate love of learning was stirred into life. Here he learned how to write, and, from various sources, of the great world beyond the Jewish community. His grandfather told him stories of Aristotle as well as of Maimonides, of the Crimean War, and of Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign. In fact, a minor battle between French and Russian troops had taken place just outside the town and some of the redoubts built and abandoned by the French were still visible. It was at Neshwies too, much to his grandfather's dismay, that Cohen first encountered Christian literature and began the process of questioning that would eventually lead to his rejection of all formal religion.

Life was not entirely pleasant for Cohen in Neshwies, even though it was a considerable improvement over what he had experienced in Minsk. His grandfather was a stern and rigid man. He was deeply religious, and demanded that his young grandson devote as much as twelve hours daily to study and prayer. When Cohen's mother urged the grandfather to see to it that Cohen receive instructions in the writing of Yiddish, he replied, "My dear daughter, I am giving your son Torah--the substance of life. The trimmings can come later."[12] He often beat the boy for relatively minor breaches of discipline, and sometimes for no reason at all. Cohen's reaction to all this seems to have been twofold. In the first place, he did develop the habit of patient, painstaking, daily study, a habit that never left him. His natural instincts, coupled to his grandfather's prodding, apparently brought about a positive reaction to scholarly activity. However, he reacted most unfavorably to his grandfather's quick and bruising punishments. In fact, he was once so dejected by the injustice of it all that he almost took his own life by leaping into a neighbor's well. His last days in Neshwies were also darkened by the death of his young brother. Cohen had grown quite fond of this latest addition to the family, and spent long hours dreaming of how the brother would one day take the place of all the playmates he had never had. It is probably not too fanciful to assume that the idea of justice--or the lack of it-- was planted in Cohen's mind at this time. At any

rate, the question, What is justice?, was to become one of the consuming themes of Cohen's lifework.

Cohen returned to Minsk in 1890. He found himself to be an orthodox pietist in a city that was rapidly becoming a cosmopolitan center, and again was something of an outcast. In Neshwies, it had been considered an act of piety to permit the payess to grow in front of the ears. When Cohen returned to Minsk in this state, people laughed at him for adhering to quaint, old-fashioned customs. Minsk was vastly more infected with the enthusiasms of the Haskaleh, which was already firing people with ideas of socialism, anarchism, zionism, and other radical and secular ideas.

The new cheder also presented Cohen with some difficulties, for it was not nearly as appealing to a ten-year-old orthodox pietist as the school in Neshwies had been. However, Cohen managed to find the intellectual diet he was beginning to yearn for even at this very early age--if we can accept his own testimony in his autobiography--by seeking out learned men in the community and by reading voraciously. One unofficial teacher during this period was an old Talmudic scholar who helped him into the Tractate Baba Kama and other advanced Hebrew studies. Another teacher, however, was one of the "New Breed" of Haskaleh enthusiasts who was also a socialist. He planted some of the seeds in Cohen's mind that flowered years later on the Lower East Side of New York.

Cohen also learned to read Yiddish during this period, by selling the Beigles his mother gave him for lunch and using the money to borrow books from a Yiddish lending library. In this way, he was able to read the Yosiphan, as well as translations of Shakespeare, a history of Elizabethan England, and even the Arabian Nights. Quickly now, his reading spread out to embrace many peoples and many cultures. He established the habit of reading widely and deeply in an incredible variety of fields.

The bulk of his reading, of course, was in Yiddish. The first Yiddish novel Cohen remembered reading was a translation from the Hebrew of Abraham Mappu's The Love of Zion, a melodramatic historical romance set in the Holy Land. Later, he picked up a copy of Shomer's The Cohen, under the mistaken idea that it was a pious book. Reading The Cohen led him to other secular books by the same author. Shomer (M. M. Shaikewich) employed a whole stable of hack writers who ground out hundreds of novels and short stories that were purposefully aimed at less educated, and women, readers. More often than not, these tales revolved around an improbable romance between a Yeshiva student and a princess, or a count and a serving girl, and described the course of their highly improbable love affair. After various ups and downs, there was, inevitably, a happy ending.[13] Shomerian literature is not highly regarded among the critics of Yiddish literature today, but it must be admitted that these tales filled an important need among lower class Jews for reading material

that was not beyond their limited abilities. For Cohen, the tales of Shomer and his associates opened up the whole world of secular literature.

The giant of Yiddish literature in the last decades of the nineteenth century was Cholem Jacob Abramovitch (1835-1917) who wrote under the name of Mendele Moicher Sforim. Much of Mendele's work was social satire aimed at those in positions of power who wronged the "little people." Mendele was a realist, a careful writer who gave literary expression to the great themes of the Haskaleh. His work was at a level considerably above that of the Shomerians, and his influence upon subsequent events among East European Jewry was immense. Cohen first encountered Mendele in The Dobbin, an allegory of the suffering Jews. This led him to Die Takse (The Meat Tax) and Fishke, der Kroomer (Fishke, the Lame One). In these and many other tales and novels, Mendele carefully outlined the systems of social and economic injustice under which the Jews suffered.

The principal follower of Mendele Mocher Sforim was Sholem Rabinovitch (1859-1916), who took the pen name of Sholem Aleichem. Cohen worked his way through the rather extensive miscellany edited by Sholem Aleichem, entitled Volksbibliothek. Each of these volumes contained a collection of sketches of Jewish life, some historical tales, a bit of literary criticism, and usually a novel. Aleichem's works, coupled with Mendele's, gave Cohen a firm grounding in the best Yiddish literature of the period. So well did Cohen remember

all these tales that he was able, by re-telling the stories to groups of neighborhood children, to overcome some of the ostracism he had suffered.[14]

The time in Minsk came to an abrupt end in 1892 when Cohen's family found itself in difficulties with the Russian police. There were some problems over his father's passport and his brother, Tom, had escaped service in the Czar's army by emigrating illegally. When this fact was discovered by the Russian authorities, a fine of 300 kopecs was levied against the family. This was a huge sum, and it was not long before they were forced to sell, at a loss, the building they had acquired in Minsk. After a brief farewell visit to Neshwies, Cohen, his mother, and his sister set out for America. They crossed the border illegally, a common practice for many emigrants, and managed to work their way to Bremerhaven. Finally, they boarded the steamer Darmstadt. After an interminable voyage--in reality, only fourteen days, but life in steerage had a way of going on forever--they arrived at Ellis Island. Once more, after years of separation, the Cohen family was re-united, and a new life was to begin. It would not be an easy life.[15]

At this point, it might be wise to pause for a moment and see what sort of person Morris Cohen was at this critical juncture in his life. By his own admission, he was quite shy and retiring, and as we have seen, he rarely played with other children. His native language was Yiddish, although he could also speak some Russian and could

read Hebrew with a fair amount of ease. He knew not a single word of English, not even the alphabet.

Several things seem to stand out, however. The first is his natural attraction to scholarship. Who can say why one child is attracted to things of the mind, and another, from the same environment, is not? Perhaps Cohen's great desire to know was merely compensation for other lacks in his life, as suggested earlier; perhaps it was nothing more than a conditioned response to his grandfather's strict discipline. We do not know. All we can say with certainty is that the lad who stepped onto American soil on July 25, 1892, seems already to have been committed to a life of scholarship.

The second outstanding aspect of his personality at this time was his religious ardor. Cohen wrote to his father shortly before coming to America that he really did not want to leave the old way of life because he feared he would be forced to come in contact with Gentiles and other impious barbarians. Unlike his dedication to learning, however, this aspect of his character was destined to be greatly modified in America. It would not be long before he turned his back on orthodoxy, and what he called supernaturalism, and carved out a place for himself in the world of philosophical naturalism. His reading of the secular literature of the Haskaleh and his conversations with various Meskalim had already stirred up the soil of his orthodoxy. He was nominally an orthodox pietist, but ideas of reform, progress, and socialism had already taken precarious root. His

education in America would soon complete the task of converting him to philosophical naturalism. It should be noted, however, that even though the mature Cohen refused to accept supernaturalism, he always retained a profound love of the Jewish tradition. And there is a whole other side to his life's work that is quite frankly spiritual, that does not wholly square with the idea of naturalism as a thorough-going materialism of some sort. We shall return to this idea in a later chapter.

During his early years in New York, Cohen suffered the same problems of adjustment as the other thirty-five million immigrants who poured into America in the century preceding the closing of the gate in 1924.[16] First of all, there was the language barrier. Throughout the period of massive immigration--as today, of course--learning English was the sine qua non for any sort of acceptance in American society. Native Americans seem to look more unkindly than many other peoples upon those who speak "differently." The concept of "broken English" is pretty much an American phenomenon. This is not to say there is no linguistic pride in other cultures. One need think only of the numerous attempts of the French Academy to keep French "pure" and to rigidify usage to see that language and cultural pride usually go hand in hand. Nevertheless, the cultural connotations associated with language as spoken by "foreigners" seem particularly strong in America. Probably this is because no nation on earth has seen such an incredible number of new arrivals in such an eyeblink

of time. It would have been nothing short of miraculous if native Americans had not built up various forms of resentment against the newcomers, and language was one of the most obvious points of departure between the two groups.

The language problem no doubt contributed as much as any other social or economic factor to the maintenance of "ghettos" for various national and ethnic groups, and certainly caused grave difficulties between the first and second generations. In time, Cohen was able to look back on his early language problems with something approaching humor, or at least with a sense of irony. He once told his children, for example, that when he arrived in New York, "All over I see wagons and carts marked 'Ice Cream.' And I think to myself what a rich man he must be, that 'Iche Creám!'"[17] This is humorous, certainly, but one cannot escape the feeling when reading an anecdote like this that the humor is a veil, that the teller of jokes on himself can laugh today, but that at the time the experience contained an emotional component that was not humorous at all.

Cohen was able to solve the language problem in an amazingly short time. In fact, by 1895--just three years after he had arrived--he managed to graduate from public school and earn a gold medal for scoring highest of the year on the City College entrance examinations. The lessons in patience and painstaking scholarship that he had learned from his grandfather and early teachers paid quick and tangible dividends in the New World. Cohen was so used to studying that

he was not at all uncomfortable with the kind of drilling which is unfortunately necessary to learn a new language. When he was put into an elementary classroom with native speakers, for example, and found that he knew nothing of how to parse and diagram, he took home a grammar book and read it through from cover to cover in a single evening. When he was called to the blackboard the next day, he was prepared.[18] He did the same thing with pronunciation. We know from journals he has left behind that he constantly drilled himself in English phonetics until he could speak the language with great fluency.[19]

Life was hard for all immigrant families in New York at the turn of the century, and no less so for the Cohens. Anti-Semitism was a much more potent force then, than now, and Morris Cohen was subjected to his share of beatings at the hands of hostile Irish and German children from nearby neighborhoods.[20] The tauntings and beatings of ignorant children he could at least tolerate, but he was particularly depressed when he overheard one of his teachers admonish a fellow student for his bad posture by saying, "Don't walk like a 'sheeny' ".[21] Cohen would never forget these insults; in fact, he spent the last years of his life battling the world-wide spread of anti-Semitism in the 1930's and 1940's.

There were other important influences during these boyhood years, however, besides English grammar and anti-Semitism. First, there were the brutal facts of economic life with which the Cohen family had to contend. For a number of years they lived in various

tenements on the Lower East Side. They also lived for a few months in a building in Brownsville which they purchased on mortgage just as the panic of 1893 got underway. In the ensuing period of economic disaster, they lost the building, and with it every last penny they had managed to hoard. They were destitute, and Morris often had to trudge across the Brooklyn Bridge to borrow food money from his brother Tom, who had managed to hold onto a job in a Manhattan shoe store.

For years, Abraham Cohen toiled in a sweat shop. The unions in the garment industry were still pathetically weak. There were no safety standards, no fringe benefits, and the wages were totally inadequate. The work was very hard, boring, and dangerous. With a constant flow of cheap labor into the country, it was almost impossible for the immigrant workers to organize and demand better conditions. Pay was by piece work, and often the workers joined in debilitating competition to see who could turn out the most trousers or dresses in a single day. Naturally, the owners encouraged this sort of thing because it increased profits. Never mind the price it exacted in human suffering. Day after day, Cohen saw his father return from work absolutely exhausted, and without enough money to feed his family. "That experience," Cohen wrote years later,

> made me realize what later my friends educated in economics could not see, namely, the wisdom as well as the humanity of some limitation of output. For, in the long run, excessive work diminishes the effective life span and thus reduces the chief productive power

> of the nation. Even a machine cannot be economically run if it functions always at maximum speed. What good is it to a nation to increase the number of its commodities if it exhausts and brutalizes its human beings?[22]

This direct, early acquaintance with the facts of economic life was enhanced by Cohen's reading. First, there was the newspaper, Die Arbeiter Zeitung, the Jewish organ of the Socialist Labor Party. Die Arbeiter Zeitung regularly featured such socialist polemicists as Abraham Cahan. The socialist monthly, Die Zukunft, also circulated freely among the workers of the Lower East Side. These two publications had an enormous influence on the development of Cohen's social and economic views, as well as on the development of his concept of world affairs.

As we noted earlier, Cohen had encountered socialistic ideas before coming to America. Among the Jews of Eastern Europe, Socialism was one of the most potent outcomes of the Haskaleh.[23] Cohen had listened to a socialist Maskil for a time, and had gotten most of his news from the Hebrew weekly, Hazfirah, which also had something of a socialistic cast. But in the Russian ghettos of Cohen's childhood, socialism had more of a local than an international flavor. Socialism to Cohen had meant opposition to the Czar's regime, more than anything else, and a way of improving the lot of suffering Jewry. And since he had first learned of socialism within a Jewish context, it had for him a certain aura that was almost religious. He considered socialism as merely another, highly moral, aspect of the Haskaleh. In America, all this changed. Die Arbeiter Zeitung was published for a

community drawn from nearly all corners of the earth. Accordingly, accounts of world events in the paper avoided the narrow provincialism that has plagued American journalism right down to our own time. Reading Die Arbeiter Zeitung and Die Zukunft taught Cohen always to see American affairs in a world context, something that far too few native American writers have been able to do. And since they were socialist publications, they quite naturally stressed the economic factor in human life. In his later analyses of contemporary affairs, Cohen showed that he was always aware of the terribly important role that economics plays in men's affairs. He never committed himself wholly to economic determinism, but he never forgot that much of human life must be explained in economic terms.

The twin influences--reading and first-hand experience with the so-called free enterprise system--went together to make Cohen a life-long socialist, although his brand of socialism was somewhat benign and non-revolutionary. Cohen often publicly disagreed with whatever socialist or communist leader was currently popular, in this country or abroad. In fact, many of his friends in later life were major figures in finance and commerce. Nevertheless, he never abandoned his quest for a more humane economic order along socialist lines and continued to support socialist candidates of the Norman Thomas type until the end of his life. His daughter illustrated one amusing aspect of Cohen's willingness to take socialism into the "enemy" camp in this anecdote:

> On a Sunday afternoon in the thirties, Eli Bernheim, a retired banker, was visiting his nephew, Arthur Meyer, in Scarsdale. Harold Winkler, then a Harvard classmate of Meyer's son, Daniel, tells how sad Uncle Eli was about the economic ills that were besetting the free-enterprise system. Cohen was walking around the room, glancing at books on the library shelves. Suddenly he broke into the conversation, saying, "I know the solution, I think, to these various problems."
>
> Bernheim replied, "Why, Professor Cohen, I am delighted. I have been studying and thinking about these things for a long time. Do tell me what the answer must be."
>
> "Socialism," said Cohen.
>
> There was dead silence, and then Mr. Bernheim pulled himself to his feet and was helped out of the room. Winkler overheard him say as he went out, "Arthur, you know that I esteem Professor Cohen very highly. He is a great scholar. But, Arthur, do you think it's wise, when your young son and his friends are home from college, to have this dangerous radical mind around?"[24]

To label Cohen as a "dangerous radical mind" is, of course, more than a bit hyperbolic, although he was attacked from time to time by defenders of the economic status quo. In fact, he was once accused of treasonable conduct in an article in the Manufacturer's Record with the sensational title, "Teaching Treason in American Colleges."[25] On the other hand, he was also attacked from the left in a column in New Masses[26] after he had published an article in Modern Monthly entitled "Why I Am Not a Communist."[27] We will deal with Cohen's brand of socialism in greater detail in a later chapter. For now, it is sufficient to say that he learned his lessons well on the Lower East Side of New York at the turn of the century, and he never forgot the terrible injustice that can accompany a totally uncontrolled economic order.

Cohen's adolescent years were not devoted entirely to weighty economic problems, however. As soon as he was able to read English he turned to the literature and history of his adopted culture with the same enthusiasm he had shown for Hebrew and Yiddish literature. The very first book he read in English was entitled A Child's History of the Civil War.[28] Apparently, this book kindled an interest that also stayed with him for the rest of his life, for one of the little known facts about Cohen is that, along with his serious studies in the philosophy of history, he was a very thorough military history buff. Although the American Civil War was his specialty, he often surprised friends with the prodigious amount of information he stored in his head about the comings and goings of armies and navies all over the world. During the Japanese-Russian War, for example, he completely flabbergasted some fellow graduate students at Harvard by naming all the ships in the Russian fleet--and then all the ships in the Japanese fleet.[29]

Cohen read most of the "classics" of British and American literature, which were standard fare, at least in excerpted form, in the readers used in the public schools at the time. Adventure stories occupied his interest for a while, and he worked his way through the standard editions of Hugo and Dumas. He had read some of these novels in Yiddish translations, but now he re-read them in English, building up his command of the language in the process.

Interestingly, except for a book he won as a prize in a public school class, Cohen apparently remained immune to the pulp fiction of the day. Although he was the right age to have encountered the last of the Horatio Alger books, and the first of "Burt L. Standish's" Frank Merriwell novels,[30] he seems to have remained uninfected. This is not an insignificant point, because virtually every boy who "read" during the years between the close of the Civil War and the 1920's was affected, one way or another, by these novels. In the three decades before his death in 1899, Horatio Alger, Jr., published dozens of boys' stories with such alliterative titles as Work and Win, Strive and Succeed, Do and Dare, Try and Trust, and Risen from the Ranks. Their plots follow a simple formula: a boy of humble background faces seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Somehow, he must make enough money to save his mother's mortgaged homestead from an idle--and therefore evil--rich man in the old home town. He goes off to the city to earn his fortune, and there by Pluck and Luck (mostly luck: the Alger hero always gets a lucky break, like rescuing a millionaire's daughter in a runaway carriage, just before the villain forecloses) he succeeds. However, it is not only luck that allows him to prevail: he has kept himself pure--by going to church and not smoking cigars--so that he is able to seize the main chance when it comes his way. The Alger books reflect most of the overt beliefs of the age: Franklin-Emerson-Spencer Self-Reliance, vertical mobility, equal economic opportunity, life

as a gigantic foot-race, etc. The most famous speech in American history, Russel Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds"[31] illustrates the same theme. That all this was at variance with the facts of economic life mattered not at all: a great number of people believed it, and most boys growing up in the era had to react against it in later life.

Cohen existed outside conventional American culture and avoided most of this clap-trap. It should also be noted that he was strongly influenced by Franklin's writings, but for all the wrong reasons. Benjamin Franklin has suffered the same fate as all the early heroes of American history (except Tom Paine, of course), in that he has become a symbol for "practicality" and middle-class morality. It should be remembered, however, that Franklin was actually an incredibly accomplished man. This is not the place to recite all of Franklin's achievements, but we might note in passing that, aside from his well-known efforts in business and government, Franklin was a highly-respected theoretical scientist--the first American elected to membership in the Royal Society--a most important supporter of libraries and public schools, and, in his own way, an original philosopher. Franklin's speculations go far beyond the often suffocating morality of Poor Richard's Almanac. He was a Deist in religion (as were most of the Founding Fathers: a fact conveniently overlooked by most popularizers of American Heroes), a practitioner of advanced scientific method, and the possessor of a highly critical and introspective mind. It was these traits that Cohen was attracted

to in Franklin, not his inventions of stove and bifocals, or his "success" as a publisher. When we compare Cohen's later philosophical naturalism to Franklin's own philosophy, it is not at all remarkable that Cohen found much to interest him in the Autobiography and other works of Franklin.

In the late nineteenth century there were a number of "literary societies" on the Lower East Side, usually named for some figure in American literature. In due course, Cohen was elected to membership in the Bryant Literary Society. It was customary for the members to debate a previously chosen topic at their weekly meetings. By participating in these debates, Cohen sharpened his forensic skills. This early experience in debate seemed to help Cohen a great deal in later life, for he always managed to shine in any oral test of wits.

By the time Cohen was ready for college, he had read most of the British and American essayists, poets, and novelists. He had also augmented Die Arbeiter Zeitung and Die Zunkunft by reading in such home-grown publications as the North American Review and a host of other popular magazines and newspapers.

At City College, Cohen found his true milieu. He entered City College in September of 1895, and, as he later wrote, it was this institution that "was to nurture and sustain me through the major part of my life."[32]

City College has always been in a class by itself among American colleges and universities. In the first place, it is part of

the public school system of the City of New York, which makes it quite different from the more usual privately-endowed or state-supported institution. Secondly, City's student body has always been composed almost entirely of New York City residents. From the time the school was created by popular referendum in 1846, its students have, more often than not, been the children of poor immigrants. Because of their background--both immigrant and economic--City College students usually come to college with what Cohen said, "...are today provincially called 'un-American' ideas."[33] In short, the City College student body has always been more "radical" than the student bodies of more traditional institutions. It is interesting to note that many of the techniques employed by the current generation of student radicals--sit-ins, class boycotts, attacks on administrative policy in the student newspaper, mass confrontations, etc.--were used with occasional success at City College more than a half-century ago.[34] This is not to say that student radicalism was born at City College and then somehow mysteriously transported to all those Presbyterian and State Teachers Colleges out there in the hinterlands. There have been many-sided disputes involving faculty, students, administrators, and even townspeople as long as there have been colleges. It is only to suggest that the environment Cohen found himself in at City College at the turn of the century was one quite amenable to a young lad who often confided to his private journal that he daydreamed of becoming a "socialist agitator."[35]

Most of Cohen's classmates needed no "motivation" in the jargon of today's specialists in education. City College students, for the most part, were aggressive, highly-motivated young men who knew that education, or at least the outward semblance of education, was the key to social and economic mobility in American culture. No doubt, there were few who had the lofty ambitions and moral earnestness of Morris Cohen. Without question, City College has had its fair share of hangers-on, cheaters, and con men. Samuel Ornitz has given us an excellent portrait of the "other" kind of City College student in his sadly-neglected novel, Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl.[36] Nevertheless, there were a sufficient number of the Cohen type of student to make City College a rather exciting place. Unfortunately, many of their teachers were quite undistinguished: both pay and prestige were low at City College in 1900. The students themselves made up for this deficiency whenever they could. They had access to libraries all over New York, and, some of them at least, used them; they attended lectures at places like Cooper Union and the Educational Alliance; and among themselves they read and argued endlessly. By no stretch of the imagination could City be called a first-rate college at this time, but when we consider all these factors it is not surprising that such a large number of alumni went on to distinguish themselves as rabbis, Christian ministers, business and social leaders, union organizers, statesmen and jurists.[37]

The five-year curriculum which Cohen followed--the first year was called "sub-freshman" year and was really a year of preparatory work for college--comprised science, mathematics, foreign languages, and history. Obviously, these were all basic courses. There was no time for "frills." As we would expect, Cohen excelled in his undergraduate work, winning the top award in several of his courses. His first philosophy course, a course in logic, was taken during his sophomore year. Although the course itself made little impression on him, it did lead him to read Mill's Logic as well as some of the writings of Carus, Watson, Comte, Spencer, and Palmer.[38] The following year, Cohen began to frequent the Columbia University Library, and here he set out on his journey in philosophy. During this year, which he later called his best year in undergraduate school, he worked his way through the pre-Socratics, Plato's Parmenides, Aristotle's Metaphysics, Barth's Die Philosophie der Geshicte als Soziologie, and Hegel's Encyklopaedie. He also read a fair amount in Hebrew history, Biblical criticism, anthropology, prehistory, and the histories of Egypt and Assyria.[38] This is an enormous amount of reading for a boy not yet twenty, and we have only Cohen's own testimony that he actually accomplished all this. There is no good reason to doubt his word, however, and his journal entries for the period seem to bear out what he says about his reading. It is probably safe to assume that during the year-and-a-half between the spring of 1898 and the fall of 1899, Cohen settled upon a career as a

philosopher. Until this time, his journal entries seem rather desultory: at one time he wants to be a teacher, at another a lawyer, then a newspaperman, and then a socialist agitator. Sometimes he is obsessed with ideas of "building character," and resolves to deny himself candy. At others he writes lists of things, such as how many hardbacked and how many paperbacked books are in his personal library.[40] He remains confused for a long time: "...I am like a ship without a rudder tossed about on an angry ocean--no--sometimes on a calm ocean, but no land in sight...."[41] But more often, now, his private writings are marked by a general critical spirit and a concern with deeper philosophical matters. He is not yet immersed in technical philosophy, but the names of various philosophers begin to appear in his journal entries, along with a preoccupation for some of the traditional concerns of metaphysics. For example, he sees within himself a constant warfare between heart and mind:

> Since a few months a struggle is raging within me between old tendencies to cold reasoning and inclinations to enjoy feelings. Looking over my existence in the past, I see a desultory warfare within...[42]

Here in embryonic form we see the germ of the idea that Cohen was later to develop as an overall principle of metaphysics. All his life he wrestled with these twin aspects of human existence--which he came to call Reason and Nature, although others have dealt with them under different names. This sort of bifurcation of mind and nature has been one of the most perplexing problems in philosophy since the dawn of human history, and it utterly dominates the epistemological

arguments of the past three centureis. This, however, is leading us too far afield for this chapter. It is enough to say here that by the end of his undergraduate career, Morris Cohen had at least raised a number of the ethical and metaphysical questions he would later attempt to resolve. In a subsequent chapter, we will return to the question of the bifurcation of mind and nature.

In the world beyond college walls, Cohen entered into a relationship that proved to be more important in his overall development than anything he experienced in undergraduate school. During the winter of 1896-97 Cohen and a group of friends organized a club called the Marx Circle. There were many such clubs in New York at this time. Some of them took an active part in city politics, campaigning for candidates like Daniel DeLeon and Henry George. Cohen's group, however, was usually content to meet at various places to read and argue over Das Kapital, Merrie England, and other socialist classics. In the fall of 1898, the gentle radicals of the Marx Circle heard that a professor by the name of Thomas Davidson was going to give a lecture at the Educational Alliance, a well-endowed, Jewish settlement house on the Lower East Side. Professor Davidson was well known as a defender of the principle of individualism, although he had his own brand of individualistic ethics and eschewed the then popular school of Herbert Spencer and his American apologists. The members of the Marx Circle were of course up to their ears in various collectivist theories, so they

decided to attend Davidson's lectures to heckle the good professor. Davidson, an idealistic Scotsman who devoted his life to a search for ways to ameliorate man's sad state, had come to believe that the secret to improving man's lot lies within each individual soul. He was born himself in an Aberdeen slum, and somehow had managed to acquire a most profound humane education. He believed that all people could improve, if only they could be "educated." All people, he maintained--the oppressors as well as the oppressed-could benefit from humane learning. Accordingly, he started various educational projects, including the famous "Breadwinners College" at the Educational Alliance.

Cohen found all this absurd, maintaining instead that only through a radical change in the economic order could improvement in man's state be effected. A long series of debates between the older professor and the young radical ensued. Neither succeeded in winning the other over, but Davidson's fundamental faith in the absolute worth of the individual human being forced Cohen to examine critically some of the ideas to which he had become most attached. At this point in his development, he was almost totally committed to a Marxist interpretation of life. The very erudite Thomas Davidson was able to open Cohen's eyes to other possibilities. He made Cohen consider not only economic forces, but also the force of the individual human spirit. Never again would Cohen commit himself to a single theory of history, or of anything else. The importance of this cannot

be overemphasized, for throughout his mature work, Cohen constantly refers to himself as a "pluralist." In fact, the principle of polarity, which Cohen would later develop as the basis of his metaphysical statement, is really nothing more than the way of the pluralist, the way of looking at the world from different vantage points. Before he met Davidson, Cohen viewed the world completely in terms of classes and abstract forces. Davidson did not succeed in making him abandon his concern for man en masse, but he did make Cohen see that masses of people only become understandable when we consider the worth of the individual. It is the tension between groups and individuals that forms the basis of Cohen's liberalism, and sets him apart from those "liberals" who fervently believe that the sole purpose of government is to serve a transcendent god who goes under some such name as "the public interest." We return to this argument in a later chapter.

Cohen spent the summer of 1899 at Davidson's Adirondack retreat, Glenmore. This was the first time in his life that Cohen was able to lead an active, outdoor life. The youngsters Davidson gathered about him mixed studies in history, philosophy, and poetry with mountain climbing and camping. Cohen thrived in this environment. Under Davidson's tutelage, he studied Italian, and learned enough to read the Divine Comedy in the original. He also read Hume's Treatise on Human Nature for the first time during this momentous summer, and began The Critique of Pure Reason. Seven

years later, he would complete a Harvard doctoral dissertation on Kant.

Davidson was something of a folklorist who loved to recite and sing the ballads of his native land. Around evening campfires, he acquainted Cohen with the Scottish balladeers and the poetry of Robert Burns. Cohen also developed a taste for Tennyson, and for lyric poetry in general, during his stay at Glenmore.

Davidson had many distinguished friends who often visited Glenmore. Wilman Sheldon had just completed his doctorate at Harvard and lectured to Davidson's charges on various topics. William Torrey Harris, one of the original St. Louis Hegelians, founder of the Journal of Speculative Philosophy, and United States Commissioner of Education for seventeen years, was a very close friend of Thomas Davidson. At Davidson's request, he took a great interest in Morris Cohen, and encouraged him to continue his studies. This must have been highly stimulating for an immigrant youth not yet twenty years old, for Harris was one of the giants in the philosophy of the day. Although he is rarely read today--his rather right-wing interpretations of Hegel seem to hold little interest for modern philosophers--he was very widely known, both as a philosopher and as an educator, in his own time. Encouragement from such an Olympian figure was exactly what Cohen needed at this point in his life. Another friend of Davidson's that Cohen met during a later trip to Glenmore was Felix Adler, founder of the Ethical Culture Society. Cohen also studied for

a time under Adler at Columbia, and was later to receive a fellowship from the Ethical Culture Society that enabled him to pursue his doctoral work at Harvard. Not only did Thomas Davidson introduce Cohen to a wider world of ideas, he also introduced him to a larger community of thinking men than he had ever known before, and thus gave him the encouragement he needed to continue his journey in philosophy.

When Cohen returned to the city in the autumn of 1899, Davidson asked him to prepare a series of thirty lectures in the history of civilization for the Breadwinners' College. Aside from occasional tutoring, this was his first teaching assignment. It may seem strange that Davidson would ask a boy not yet out of undergraduate school to take on such a task. Obviously, the "history of civilization" is an immense topic. Making demands like this was characteristic of Davidson, however, for he had abundant faith that ordinary people could respond "heroically" if they were only given the opportunity. He knew that Cohen had the capacity to bring such a huge topic under some kind of control, and he also knew that taking a long view of the entire history of man would benefit his students. Today, of course, such a title seems absurd, but when we examine what was actually taught in the course, it appears a bit more familiar. Actually, certain "core curriculum" courses, or "basic college" courses in our own time are very similar to what Cohen taught under the title "The History of Civilization." The three-term sequence in "Humanities" that has been

taught successfully at Michigan State University for the past quarter century is an example of the kind of course Davidson had in mind. In preparing his lectures, Cohen began accumulating notes on history, and the philosophy of history, that he worked on throughout his career. His final statement on this immense subject appeared as the Paul Carus Lectures for 1941, and was eventually published under the title, The Meaning of Human History.[43] Thus was Davidson's faith in an obscure immigrant youth repaid nearly a half-century later.

Thomas Davidson died of cancer in September of 1900. Although their relationship had lasted only a few months, it changed the entire direction of Cohen's life. Davidson was the first older person to listen with respect to Cohen's developing ideas, and Davidson's own ideas served as a tempering agent for some of Cohen's early attempts to make sense out of the world's chaos. Surely it is no exaggeration to state that Thomas Davidson provided exactly that heroic ideal which Cohen so desperately needed at this period in his life. Ten years later, Cohen wrote:

> When I first met Davidson I was a Junior in college, barely over 18 years of age. I had done a considerable amount of reading and my cocksureness about most questions of life was more than is usual even at that age. Needless to add I was very critical about other people's views. I at once recognized in Davidson's philosophy and in his social and religious teachings--especially in his economics--views diametrically opposed to mine and, therefore, necessarily false. Ten years of study and life have not, I humbly confess, radically changed my views in that respect. Davidson's extreme individualism is still my favorite target. Yet my personal debt to Davidson is probably larger than that of any other member of our [Thomas Davidson] society.

> Davidson got a hold of me when my soul was parched and all its zest for life gone. Through his personal friendship he opened the wells of life within me, and caused living waters to flow forth. I stopped brooding about the injustice in the world, and went in, with all my might and main, into Davidson's work.
>
> The little Latin and less Greek which was all he directly taught me I have most honorably forgotten, but the remembrance of my personal relation with him is enough to bear me up for a lifetime.[44]

In the long run, "Davidson's Work" which Cohen refers to was a life-long pursuit of truth and justice. In the short run, however, it was teaching in the Davidson School of the Thomas Davidson Society, officially known as Branch B of the Educational Alliance. This was a further development of the Breadwinners' College. The experiment in higher education for poor people seems to have had a considerable amount of success during the few years that it lasted. There have been numerous attempts at popular education throughout the years, both in this country and abroad. The French movement for universités populaires is an example; so are the workingmen's colleges that blossomed in England prior to World War I. In very recent times, there have been numerous attempts in the United States to establish "Free Universities", both in the counter-culture that has sprung up around our colleges and universities and in poor neighborhoods in the cities. The "Each One, Teach One" program in Cuba has received world wide attention (except, of course, in the United States).

The Davidson School provided both basic and higher education for a large number of young adults in the years immediately preceding World War I. Eventually, it was replaced--at least in theory--by the

adult education programs of the regular city high schools, and by evening programs in New York's many colleges. For a time, however, this school filled a pressing need for both students and teachers. Standards were high; dedication was complete. The teachers were not paid for their work, a fact which is almost incomprehensible in our time, so their rewards came entirely from their work. Cohen learned how to teach in this idealistic environment and went on to become one of the most celebrated teachers of his generation. To Cohen, teaching was always more than a job, more than a profession. It was, instead, an act of love, of dedication--perhaps even a sacred calling. Always he believed that teaching was not training for some specific end, but rather that it should be directed at making people aware of "the values and problems of humane living."[45] It was more than polite hyperbole when Justice Holmes wrote years later, "I envy the youth who sat at his feet."[46]

While he was teaching at the Davidson School, Cohen was also attending classes at the graduate school of Columbia University. For a short time, he also tried teaching in the New York City public schools. This, however, proved to be a disaster. The dedicated young idealist could not handle public school classes, where he had to face a crowd of unruly youngsters who had no inclincation whatsoever to learn anything. He tried valiantly to excite their interest, but failed utterly. It was a most disheartening experience. Interestingly, however, Cohen did not give in to any elitist idea about

education, even in the face of the grave difficulties he had with his public school charges. He realized that these children had been destroyed by a brutal environment long before he saw them, and that the solution to their problems lay in improving the whole social condition, not in merely eliminating certain people from educational opportunity.

Cohen's tenure as a public school teacher was quite short. In November, 1902, he received an appointment as a mathematics instructor at Townsend Harris Hall High School, the preparatory school division of City College. This was the beginning of his long teaching career at CCNY. It would be a number of years, however, before he was appointed to a position in the philosophy department.

While teaching, Cohen continued his graduate studies at Columbia. Felix Adler was sufficiently impressed by his work to see to it that Cohen received a $750 stipend from the Ethical Culture Society. This fellowship allowed him to enter the Harvard Graduate School in September of 1904. Cohen carried a terrific load during the two years he was at Cambridge. His first year consisted of courses and seminars in ethics, logic, metaphysics, Kant, Descartes, Leibnitz, Spinoza, and the history and science of religion. His main teachers were James and Royce, whom he seemed to impress favorably, for the next year he received an additional $250 as a graduate assistant.

His second year, Cohen roomed with Felix Frankfurter, thus beginning a friendship that would last for the rest of his life. Frankfurter, who was in law school at the time, excited Cohen's interest in law. Under Frankfurther's influence, Cohen came to see that the study of law--or jurisprudence--properly belonged to philosophy. Accordingly, he sometimes "cut" a lecture by William James in order to listen to one by Roscoe Pound or some other legal luminary. Thus began another of Cohen's life-long pursuits, the study of the effect of law on human society.

During his second year, Cohen apparently overworked. He had been plagued by bad health all his life, but now his condition became very grave. Near the end of December, 1905, he suffered a complete physical and emotional collapse. He was forced to drop out of school for a time to take a "cure" at a sanitarium in Watkins Glen, New York. Despite this setback, however, he was able to finish his doctoral dissertation during the spring. The dissertation, entitled Kant's Doctrine as to the Relation between Duty and Happiness, was accepted in June, 1906. Cohen received his Ph. D. in that month, along with first-rate recommendations from William James, G. H. Palmer, Josiah Royce, Hugo Munsterberg, and Ralph Barton Perry.[46] Harvard completed his formal education; Morris Cohen was now to embark on his independent journey in philosophy.

Another event occurred in this month of June, 1906, that was no doubt of even greater importance to Cohen than receiving his

doctorate. Seven years earlier, after a lecture at the Educational Alliance, one of the bright young ladies in the audience mustered the courage to approach the earnest young man who debated so well and so often with anybody on the platform. "What did you think of the lecture?" Mary Ryshpan asked. Cohen drew himself up stiffly. "To answer your question," he said, "would take volumes that only the learned would read."[47] With an introduction like this, it is a wonder that Mary Ryshpan and Morris Cohen ever got to know each other. They did, however, and after a very long courtship, filled with all sorts of doubts and hesitancies, they finally married. Like Davidson, Mary Ryshpan had a most salutary effect on Cohen's development. Before meeting her, he seems to have had few friends, and none of the opposite sex. And he struggled against his initial feelings of tenderness for her. Cohen, it must be remembered, had very few moments of pleasure during his childhood and adolescence. Unhappiness was his natural state. As a child, for example, he resolved to give up candy, apparently as an exercise in self denial.[48] There were very powerful streaks of asceticism and Puritanism in his psychological make-up. In fact, throughout his writings, we can detect a tragic awareness that always borders on melancholy. He never gave in to it completely, but he is never too far away from it either. At the time of his first acquaintance with his future bride, he had already decided to follow the philosopher's life, and to Cohen this meant a life totally dedicated to the search for truth. Even his

doctoral dissertation reflects this idea: the relation between duty and happiness. Cohen, at this time, would naturally opt for the higher duty of the categorical imperative, not the temporal satisfactions of normal human life. The ardor he had developed for religion in the old culture had been transformed into an equally intense passion for philosophy in the new.

Mary Ryshpan understood all this very well indeed. She was exceedingly patient with him, putting up with his doubts and fears long after a lesser woman would have given up. They married, and somehow worked out a satisfactory compromise between temporal pleasure and higher duty. In fact, they had a most happy and satisfying marriage. For thirty-six years, she tended her husband with courage and devotion, bringing happiness into a life that would otherwise have been very bleak. When Cohen lost his wife in 1942, he was consumed with grief, and never wholly recovered from the blow.

Perhaps it is foolish to speculate about what did not take place, but one cannot escape the feeling that without the humanizing influences of Thomas Davidson and Mary Ryshpan, Morris Cohen would have turned out to be a very different man than he was. These two people opened up whole new worlds of experience to him, and forced him to abandon the fiendishly intellectual approach to life that he was then embarked upon. Ideas pulled out of the context of human experience become dry and sterile things. Through these two people, Morris Cohen learned always to root his ideas in the rich soil of human experience.

After a honeymoon trip to England and Scotland, the Cohens returned to New York and Morris went back to his old job as a mathematics instructor at Townsend Harris Hall. It would be nearly six years until he was appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy.

Such a long rejection was a bitter pill for Cohen to swallow. Cohen was always rather reticent about stating why he was denied a regular appointment. No doubt, there were certain matters relating to the internal politics of City College that had some bearing on his case. By all accounts, Cohen was a bit more outspoken than was expected of a young instructor in 1906. He was also rather careless about matters of dress, and probably did not take such things as faculty teas with the president's wife as seriously as he might have. He was also known to be active in the Socialist Labor Party, and this probably contributed to his being considered "unsafe" as a regular faculty member. Most important, however, is the fact that up until this time, philosophy was viewed at most colleges as some sort of training for "Christian living." Throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth at some colleges, it was the president's task to lecture each graduating class on the ethics of modern living. Professors in philosophy departments, more often than not, received whatever training they had in the nation's divinity schools. They were, first, Christian ministers, and after that, philosophers. Shortly after he was appointed to a position in the philosophy

department, Cohen was asked by the department head, "What do you do to make your students fine fellows?"[49] This pretty well summed up the ideal of many philosophy departments: the teaching of philosophy was to make "fine fellows" of students, and almost always this meant "fine Christians." Thus it is not surprising that Morris Cohen--an immigrant, a Jew, a skeptic, a critic--would be found persona non grata for such a humiliatingly long time. Eventually, however, his great gifts were recognized. From 1908 until nearly the end of his life, he read a paper each year at the American Philosophical Society meeting. Most of these papers were duly published in the Journal of Philosophy or some other scholarly publication. By 1912, Cohen had become so well known as a philosopher, that it was an embarrassment to the college to deny him a regular appointment any longer. Still, he had to work a power play against a colleague and the president in order to secure an appointment. He was offered a provisional appointment, along with a colleague who was junior to him in years of service to City College and who had received his Ph. D. some time after Cohen did. Cohen bluntly refused to accept a provisional appointment, demanding instead that he be given a regular appointment or nothing. His letter of refusal caused a furor within the college administration, but it worked: in the middle of the academic year 1911-12, Cohen was appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy.[50] He would remain in this department until his retirement in January, 1938.

During his long tenure at CCNY, Cohen taught the full range of traditional courses in philosophy, and also initiated some new ones of his own. He taught a basic logic course for a number of years, and with Ernest Nagle wrote a textbook in logic that is still in print.[51] His other courses included ethics and ancient philosophy--both traditional courses--but he also was a pioneer in the methods of interdisciplinary teaching by initiating courses in the philosophy of science, the philosophy of law, and the philosophy of civilization. Cohen simply refused to stay within the bounds of any discipline, both in his teaching and in his writing.

Had Cohen been content to remain at CCNY as an obedient careerist, his fame might not have spread throughout the academic world as it did. However, as some of his early papers made their way into print, he was asked to accept visiting professorships and to give individual lectures at universities and other institutions all over the United States. He gave a series of lectures on philosophy at Columbia as early as the academic year 1906-07, and again at that university in the summer sessions of 1918 and 1941. He also taught a summer school course in the Columbia Law School in 1927. Johns Hopkins appointed Cohen a visiting professor in 1920-21 and again in 1925-26. St. Johns University Law School heard him during the years 1928-31, and the University of Buffalo Law School in 1934. He taught at both Yale University and the Yale Law School in 1929-31 and 1939-40. In 1937, Cohen went to the West Coast to give courses in

logic and socio-political philosophy at Leland Stanford University. Harvard called him to teach metaphysics in the Philosophy Department and to lecture in the Harvard Law School in 1938 and 1939. When Alvin Johnson opened the New School for Social Research in 1923, Cohen was appointed as the school's first lecturer and he continued to teach at the New School for many years. When he retired from CCNY in 1938, Richard McKeon, professor of philosophy and Greek and Dean of the Humanities at the University of Chicago, asked Cohen to take up residence at that university. Although he was weary and had retired from CCNY in order to be able to devote more time to writing, McKeon's offer of a primary research appointment with very light teaching duties proved too alluring to resist. Until 1941, when his health failed completely, Cohen was a member of the Chicago faculty. Here he gave courses and seminars in the philosophy of science, American thought, and metaphysics, as well as serving occasionally on doctoral committees.

In addition to all these academic appointments, Cohen delivered an incredible number of individual lectures at various institutions. A partial list includes: the Universities of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, New York University, Washington University, The Indianapolis Forum, Smith College, Bryn Mawr, the Brookings Institution, The Brooklyn Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cooper Union, the League for Industrial Democracy, the Labor Temple School, and a host of

others. It should also be remembered that he was a regular contributor to his own professional society, the American Philosophical Association--of which he was president in 1929-30--and was often asked to speak at the meetings of other learned societies. When we consider that Cohen was always plagued by exceedingly poor health, this record of professional achievement is truly remarkable.[52]

During Cohen's long years of teaching, literally thousands of students passed through his classes. Few of them ever forgot the experience. Cohen never lost the ardor for education as the means to living a humane life that he had inherited from Thomas Davidson, but he developed his own highly individualistic style of teaching. He summed up some of his thoughts about teaching in these words:

> I have had an unusually varied experience as a teacher. I have taught at the primary and grammar school level of the New York public schools, even the 1A or ABC class which men generally are not privileged to do. I have also taught in private schools, in public secondary schools, in college, in graduate schools, in diverse universities and even in... law schools. But as I look back on four decades of teaching, I still must confess to myself that I know little about it.... Every lesson is still an act of faith, but I cannot for the life of me, see how any book or discussion of education can help me.... Every lecture or lesson is an entirely new problem, and the complexity of it shames every attempt to bring it within the so-called science of education. It seems to me like writing on the Science of Managing One's Wife and Children. My sense of humor will not allow it.[53]

Cohen had no "philosophy" of teaching, if by that over-worked term we mean a mechanical "method" of some sort. No doubt his teaching technique would appall a great many members of education department faculties. Nevertheless, Cohen became a great teacher

by keeping faith with the idea that the teacher should be an animateur, an opener of intellectual doors, and not a prophet gathering disciples in the wilderness. If Cohen had a method, we would have to say that it was simply maintaining a concentration upon the critical examination of ideas. When class size permitted, a kind of Socratic dialogue was carried on, a give and take between teacher and student wherein the student was forced constantly to examine the sources and the implications of his ideas. Sometimes, this way of conducting a class became quite irritating to the unsuspecting student who found himself in one of Cohen's classes. Anecdotes about the sharp, sometimes caustic, repartee that took place are legion. To one student who attempted to demonstrate the validity of an argument by blurting out, "Any damn fool knows that!" Cohen responded in Johnsonian style, "I take your word for it, sir."[54] To another, who accused him of being merely a destructive critic, a gadfly with nothing of worth of his own to offer, Cohen answered:

> You have heard the story of how Hercules cleaned out the Augean stables. He took all the dirt and manure out and left them clean. You ask me: "What did he leave in their stead?" I answer: "isn't it enough to have cleaned the stables?"[55]

As amusing as such anecdotes are, however, they fail to show the real seriousness with which Cohen approached the profession of teaching. Although his classes were exciting--at least for those who entered the classroom to learn--they were not "easy." Cohen insisted upon a great deal more than witty banter and an

involved audience. All of his classroom exercises were solidly grounded in the cumulative knowledge of the past, and he insisted that his students prepare very carefully before they entered the fray. He regarded deep, careful study of man's accumulated knowledge as an absolute prerequisite to the life of scholarship, or to any other meaningful life:

> Every once in a while I hear it said that the old education sinned by conceiving of education in terms of transmission of values, or learning--that the real process of education is not the learning of old ideas, but the acquisition of power to deal with our own problems of today. This seems to me to be a vicious dilemma. There is no way in which men can acquire the power to learn except by first learning what others have learned. That has always been the case and I do not see how it can be different. Learning in Physics, as well as in Economics, the power to think new thoughts in these fields is directly proportional to the amount of knowledge, and no one has ever made an important discovery except on the basis of thorough and sound knowledge of what others had done before him. This does not mean that all who are learned have also acquired that power of originating things. There is no way in which we can train inventors or creative thinkers, any more than great creative poets. But the world's work must be directed by those who have learned the ropes. And a schooling which does not insist from the beginning on docility, on learning fully and accurately what others have achieved, can bring nothing but added perils to an already perilous world. [56]

Obviously, these are not the words of a starry-eyed misinterpretor of John Dewey's dictum to "learn by doing." Cohen saw his task as a teacher to be that of helping students prepare for living, and he knew that such preparation could only be achieved by deep and careful study. Socratic dialogue, give and take, there was in abundance in his classroom, but he always demanded that such discussions be accompanied by solid reading and careful thinking. Sidney Hook,

one of Cohen's best-known students, summed up the impact of Cohen's teaching in these words:

> In my time Professor Cohen was the strongest intellectual force in the college. His full strength was felt primarily by the students and through them reflected upon the faculty. One instructor was wont to remark that he could always pick out Cohen's students. They were distinguished by an intensity about ideas, by a catholicity of interests and by a keenness and persistency in logical analysis which often outran the limits of social discretion. This absorption in method was really the "mark of Cohen" which they bore in their manner if not on their brow. Sometimes they were not popular with other members of the faculty--they stressed the importance of giving reasons, raised doubts, challenged time-worn dogmas, interrupted the full-flowing periods of rotund rhetoric and were deaf to all arguments from authority....
>
> And yet so profound was his intellectual humility that I can truthfully assert that I have heard him say, "I do not know" more often than any other person I have ever known. Like Socrates he taught that the realization of one's ignorance was the beginning of one's wisdom. [57]

To this, Ernest Nagel has added:

> It is indeed upon integrity in one's beliefs that Professor Cohen still insists as the one cardinal virtue of the philosophic life. No student of his who was worth his salt failed to acquire it in some measure. We learned from him what grasp of subject-matter, what comprehensiveness of range, may contribute to the stature of a man. But we learned, above all, love of honesty and clarity of one's convictions, and humility in the presence of truth, to be the basis of the life of reason. His classroom methods were the expression of his passionate rationality. Ours was the joy in watching the play and penetration of a first-rate mind; and ours too was the pain which his ruthless logic, stooping for no personalities and recognizing no compulsion but that of the subject-matter, inflicted upon our vanities. He taught us, so that some of us will never forget it, that suspended judgements are achievements of intense reflection, not of indolence, and that doctrinal loyalties are not incompatible with catholicity in one's sympathies and understandings....
>
> To be docile to the lessons of experience, but withal to seek blessedness in the shadow of the ideal, has been the substance of his teachings. [58]

Along with his teaching duties, Cohen returned, in the last years of his life, to the tradition from which he had sprung. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, he was born into an orthodox Jewish family, and his early training had been in an Old World cheder. Hebrew and Talmudic studies were his first contacts with scholarship. Eventually, his studies in science and philosophy combined with his innate skepticism to cause him to reject supernaturalism, but he always maintained close ties to the Jewish community. When fascism began to spread its evil shadow over the world in the 1930's, Cohen could not keep from joining the battle against anti-Semitism. He was instrumental in forming the Conference on Jewish Relations which was one of the first non-charitable bodies in America that attempted to weld together the disparate forces in Jewish organizational life. The Conference did a great deal of important work in combating anti-Semitism in America by collecting huge amounts of actual data on the condition of Jews in America. It was Cohen's contention that the best weapon to use against bigotry was the truth, not an appeal to abstract justice. To this organization Cohen devoted much of his energy in the last days of his life. Thus his daughter said, in a striking and most fitting metaphor, "...the first and the last chapters in the book of his life were Jewish."[59]

Morris Cohen died on January 25, 1947. In an editorial--not an obituary-- the New York Times declared:

Morris Raphael Cohen, long before his death on Wednesday, had become an almost legendary figure in American philosophy, education, and the liberal tradition. He had written wise and scholarly works not only to professional philosophers but to lawyers and judges, men such as Justices Holmes and Brandeis and Cardozo, whom he counted among his intimate friends. But he had also an independent celebrity as one of those increasingly rare figures on the American scene, a great teacher. Several generations of college students at the College of the City of New York knew him as a contemporary Socrates who asked ruthlessly searching questions and persisted in questioning until he evoked such answers as the rational mind could assent to. At different periods he produced the same catalytic effect on graduate students at Harvard, Columbia, and Chicago, and at the New School for Social Research. But it was not only among students that he was an intellectual awakener. He was one of the most celebrated conversationalists of intellectual circles in our time, at once ironical and genial. He was, through his students, many of them in positions of major importance in law, industry, education, and government, a deep and wide influence on American life. If one is to measure the nature of his philosophical temper and philosophical achievements, two qualities, especially, must be noted: the wide human range of his learning and his concern for precision and rigor. He wrote and thought during his life on the philosophical foundation and meaning of such diverse subject-matter as mathematics, scientific method, history, and law. He was regarded by eminent practicing lawyers as of first-rate, almost specialist's competence. His selected papers, published some years ago under the title "The Faith of a Liberal," included essays as varied in theme as Dante and baseball. But it is in his major work, "Reason and Nature," that his own position is made clearest. He insisted on the necessity and the possibility of a rational discovery of the principles implicit in human existence and experience. He was a liberal in his warm and wide sympathies and his awareness of human tragedy in our time, but he was never taken in by sentimental or fanatic cliches. He was as critical of the rigidities and the emotionalisms of the left as he was of the right.

Morris Cohen saw philosophy not only as a clarifier and correcter of turbid human emotions and prejudices, as an enlightener of the way of life; he regarded philosophy itself as a way of life, as a consolation of steady insight and understanding in a world of the precarious and the disastrous. His ideal in philosophy was a union of "discipline and vision."

> It was this vision and discipline which sustained him during his health-breaking work for the Conference on Jewish Relations, to which the tragedy of his own people drew him. He will live not only as a philosopher but as an example of a typically American achievement. Morris R. Cohen, an immigrant boy, through his own genius and through public education, became a leader in American thought and life.[60]

These are fitting words to conclude the story of a man who was the animateur, if not for a whole generation, then at least for a very large number of men who learned to think.

During his four decades of teaching, Cohen also made a solitary journey in philosophy. He once dreamed of writing an encyclopedia of philosophy that would do for the twentieth century what the work of Diderot and d'Alembert did for the eighteenth. Obviously, such a task is beyond the powers of any mortal, but Cohen did take giant strides toward an encyclopedic in-gathering of humanistic thought. Unhappily, his health and teaching obligations did not allow him to publish as much as he wished. Nevertheless, his thirteen books and more than 250 journal articles, reviews, and "middlebrow" essays, deal with nearly every facet of human experience. It is difficult to draw these many strands into a single, coherent statement. Cohen himself never made the attempt. The many different areas of study do have common foundations, however, in their adherence to scientific method and their use of the principle of polarity. As we pointed out in the Introduction, no attempt has been made in this chapter to write a comprehensive intellectual biography of Morris Cohen. Instead, we have attempted to show only the major forces in

two worlds that fused to bring about this unique flowering. In the following chapters, we will treat Cohen's mature thought, first in a general sense, and then as he applied his metaphysical principles to specific problems.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Morris R. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949), facing p. 70.

2. Ibid., 3.

3. Ibid., 15. Incidentally, in our time of great protest against compulsory military service in the United States, some opponents of the Selective Service System have attempted to draw an analogy between the "draft" and the enforced conscription that drove so many Europeans to our shores in past years. It seems to me that this is a bad tactic. Regardless of the merits or evils of the Selective Service Law, there is obviously a different order of magnitude between two years of service and twenty-five years. Opponents of the current draft law would be wise to consider this.

4. Ibid., 15-16; cf., Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher: Morris R. Cohen in Life and Letters (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. xiv.

5. Ibid., 18.

6. Ibid., 19.

7. Ibid., 21.

8. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. xiv.

9. Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1951), p. 259.

10. The spelling of place names always presents a problem. The American Oxford Atlas spells this city Nesvish. However, I have chosen to retain the alternate spelling, Neshwies, for the not very good reason that Cohen consistently spelled it this way himself. I have done the same thing with all spellings and transliterations throughout the dissertation: Hebrew words, Yiddish words, place names, etc. When Cohen does not specify a particular spelling, I have chosen what seems to be the most common in our time.

11. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, pp. 25-31.

12. Ibid., 31.

13. Yudel Mark, "Yiddish Literature," in The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion, ed. by Louis Finkelstein (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), pp. 875-895.

14. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 48.

15. Ibid., 62.

16. Handlin, The Uprooted, p. 35.

17. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. xv.

18. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 78.

19. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, Ch. I, passim.

20. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, pp. 78-79.

21. Ibid., 79.

22. Ibid., 66-67.

23. Nathan Glazer, American Judaism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 62-63.

24. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 176.

25. "Teaching Treason in American Colleges," Manufacturer's Record, December 31, 1925, p. 1.

26. Paul Salter and Jack Librome, "Dewey, Russell, and Cohen: Why They Are Anti-Communist," New Masses, July 17, 1934, pp. ii, 24-27; iii, 22-23.

27. Morris Cohen, "Why I Am Not a Communist," Modern Monthly, 8, 1934, pp. 138-142.

28. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, pp. 73-74.

29. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 76.

30. Russel B. Nye, "The Juvenile Approach to American Culture, 1870-1930," in New Voices in American Studies, ed. by Ray B. Browne, Donald M. Winkelman, and Allen Hayman (Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue Research Foundation, 1966), pp. 67-84.

31. Robert E. Spiller, et al., Literary History of the United States (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 801.

32. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 89.

33. Ibid., 89.

34. Ibid., 154-158.

35. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, pp. 16-22.

36. Samuel Ornitz, Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923).

37. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 90.

38. Ibid., 92.

39. Ibid., 93.

40. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, Ch. I, passim.

41. Ibid., 21.

42. Ibid., 23.

43. Morris Cohen, The Meaning of Human History (Lasalle, Illinois: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1947).

44. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 54.

45. Ibid., 120.

46. Ibid., 82-84.

47. Ibid., 26.

48. Ibid., 6.

49. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 144.

50. Ibid., Ch. 18, passim; cf., Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, pp. 91-94.

51. Morris Cohen and Ernest Nagel, An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1934).

52. Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, "Morris R. Cohen the Teacher," Journal of the History of Ideas, XVIII (October, 1957), passim.

53. Ibid., 552.

54. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 143.

55. Salo W. Baron, Ernest Nagel, and Koppel S. Pinson, eds., Freedom and Reason: Studies in Philosophy and Jewish Culture in Memory of Morris R. Cohen (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951), p. 13.

56. Rosenfield, "Morris R. Cohen the Teacher," p. 553.

57. Baron, Nagel, and Pinson, Freedom and Reason, pp. 33-34.

58. Ibid., 34.

59. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 238.

60. Editorial, New York Times, Jan. 31, 1947, p. 22.

# CHAPTER III

## SCIENTIFIC METHOD AND THE PRINCIPLE OF POLARITY

As the preceding chapter should have made abundantly clear, Morris Cohen's self-image was that of the animateur, the clearer of intellectual thickets, the eternal critic. Instead of viewing himself as a philosophical system-builder in the grand manner, he adopted a more humble pose as a seeker after truth, tragically aware that he could never hope to comprehend the totality of existence. This attitude carried over in his writings, which are, almost without exception, critical rather than consciously synthetic. One looks in vain in his works for anything comparable to Aristotle's Metaphysics, Aquinas' Summa Theologiae, or Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. That Cohen was working toward a comprehensive metaphysic, virtually all commentators on his work agree, but there is no single volume we can turn to for a direct elucidation of the system behind his many analyses. Obviously, this makes it rather difficult to reduce his disparate ideas to a short essay. However, if we pick and choose carefully among his published writings, the ghostly outlines of a metaphysical system do appear.

In the first instance, Cohen adopted the Aristotelian view of philosophy as a natural outgrowth of curiosity about the world at large.[1] More than once, he wrote, "...to philosophize has always seemed to me as natural and desirable in itself as to sing, to dance

or to communicate with those we love--and as little in need of ulterior justification."[2] In other words, philosophizing and the study of philosophy are worthy ends in themselves, not means to such other ends as solving men's immediate and temporal conundrums. Furthermore, philosophizing is a perfectly natural human occupation: everybody does it, although some do it much better than others. Although he demanded the most rigorous kind of "technique," Cohen refused to construe philosophy wholly as the pursuit of solutions to narrowly-conceived technical problems. He constantly broke the bounds of technical philosophy to comment in a decidedly outspoken and critical manner on a very wide range of subjects. The catholicity of his interests is quickly revealed if we merely list the titles of a few of his essays: "Einstein and His World"; "Calvinism without the Glory of God"; "The Legend of Magna Carta"; "The Sacco-Vanzetti Case Re-Weighed"; "Dante as a Moral Teacher"; "Parrington's America"; "The Significance of Napoleon"; "The Need for a Modern University"; "On Continental Legal Theory"; --and "Baseball as a National Religion."[3]

Obviously, it is virtually impossible--at least at first glance--to find the common thread that unites these various essays. Cohen seems to resist classification. As a young man, he characterized himself as, "...a stray dog, unchained to any metaphysical kennel."[4] This youthfully exuberant metaphor was, of course, picked up by most of those who have been moved to comment on Cohen's work, since it

is not the kind of language one usually associates with philosophy. No doubt, Cohen himself eventually wished he had used language a bit less colorful to state his position as a critical philosopher. Nevertheless, this flamboyant metaphor is a fitting description for the temper, if not for the substance, of Cohen's philosophy. Let it be emphasized once again that Cohen was first and foremost a critical philosopher, perhaps the outstanding critical philosopher of his day. He fervently believed in putting men's ideas to the most rigorous tests of logic, minutely examining both fundamental premises and the implications of those premises. He enjoyed playing the devil's advocate, publicly and privately, and even argued against his own position when nobody else would.[5] From time to time, he incurred the enmity of those whose ideas he attacked, although it should be pointed out that Cohen had an uncanny ability to stay on target in philosophical debate, i.e., to attack ill-conceived or inadequately defended ideas, and not the men who advanced those ideas. The Voltairian cast to his psychological make-up did not extend to personal nastiness. In person, he was actually quite friendly, and was very solicitous of younger colleagues. Fulton Anderson, now on the graduate faculty of the University of Toronto, once told Cohen's daughter, "Morris Cohen argued only the issues. He was sweet. We all loved him."[6] Another junior colleague remembered:

> As a budding philosopher, I gave a talk that provoked his biting criticism. Afterwards he came up to me and asked, "Was that your maiden effort? Not a bad start." Then, slipping his arm through mine, "Come on, let's go to lunch."[7]

He debated, either in the pages of learned journals or on the platform, some of the giants of the day; Arthur O. Lovejoy and John Dewey, to name only two. And he felt no compunction about attacking a former student. When Sidney Hook published his well-known book on Marxism,[8] for example, Cohen vigorously attacked what he considered to be its glaring deficiencies.

In Cohen's miscellany entitled Studies in Philosophy and Science there is a transcription of a seminar at a scientific society meeting in which Cohen participated. He was closely questioned by a group of practicing scientists in reference to his ideas concerning scientific method. They, after all, were the ones who used scientific method day in and day out, who, in the patois of scientists, "do" science, while Cohen was only a teacher. Since he could make no claim to "doing" science, how could he feel so confident in talking about scientific method? Interestingly, however, even in a situation like this--where he was subjected to questioning that, while always within the bounds of polite exchange among intelligent men, still bristled with a kind of restrained indignation--Cohen managed always to turn the argument back on the issues. He says, "Well, I disagree with your contention that..." or, "The idea of 'A' is fallacious because..." and not, "You are wrong," or, "I disagree with you." It is a virtuoso's performance, and shows one of the reasons why Cohen was able to invade other professional domains--and get away with it.[9]

Behind the criticisms of myths about scientific method, philosophical technique, law, and a host of other subjects was Cohen's own philosophy. When writing about philosophers it has become customary not only to treat their philosophical "categories," but to place each philosopher himself in some sort of "category." We apparently cannot avoid the practice of labelling an individual as a particular kind of "-ist" or a practitioner of some "-ism." Thus one man is called a pragmatist while another is a positivist and a third is a phenomenologist. The man dedicated to empiricism may share something with a colleague who practices utilitarianism, but they both must be distinguished--in some areas at least--from those devoted to environmentalism. Without question, the practice of inventing such terms is of enormous help in "keeping score," but it does seem to go a bit far at times. As William Barrett puts it, "Labels in philosophy are probably a necessary pedagogical device; but to think in such labels is surely bad philosophy."[10] Perhaps the practice of labelling is what has led to the exceedingly bad pun that declares the principal occupational hazard of professional philosophers to be "hardening of the categories."

As pointed out earlier, Cohen resisted such categorization, but it was inevitable that he would eventually be tagged with some convenient label. Today he is generally classified as a philosophical naturalist.[11] Philosophical naturalism was a movement that flourished in the latter years of the nineteenth and the early decades of

the twentieth centuries. According to Roy Wood Sellars,[12] it still shows signs of life, though severely bruised and battered. Naturalism, which was a logical outgrowth of the evolutionary and pragmatic movements which preceded it, numbered in its ranks such men as Cohen, Dewey, Santayana, Sellars, Woodbridge, and perhaps even Bergson and James.

The central issue of naturalism was an attempt to solve the age-old problem of mind-nature dualism. From the time of Descartes, the "father" of modern philosophy,[13] to the time of the logical positivists, epistemology has been of central importance in philosophy. Epistemological problems have arisen because so very many philosophers have, in one way or another, insisted upon a bifurcation of the perceiver and the thing perceived, of the knower and the known, of "man" and "nature." The antithesis of the knower and the known places a wall between the knowing "mind" and the exterior world. All sorts of antinomies grow out of this fundamental conception: the supernatural is opposed to the natural, the mind to the body, spirit to matter, the "self" to the "not-self." Once these opposing categories are accepted, the central problem in modern epistemology becomes quite clear: how can the mind know anything but itself? How can one be certain that there is an external world? In short, how can we ever proceed beyond Descartes' Cogito, ergo sum?[14]

Since Descartes, many philosophers have tried to solve the mind-body problem posed by his thorough-going dualism. Some have

remained dualists and merely side-stepped the issue by proposing fanciful solutions to the enormous problems created by attempting to maintain such rigidly opposed categories. Descartes' followers Geulincx and Malebranche, for example, worked out an ingenious solution to the mind-body problem that, while maintaining dualistic categories, still makes life comprehensible. They suggested the theory of "occasionalism" which holds that the world is ordered by God so that mental and material events occur simultaneously. Geulincx used the metaphor of two clocks to illustrate this idea: suppose we have two clocks which keep perfect, simultaneous time. One clock we can see, the other we can only hear. When we look at the first and observe that it is ten o'clock, we will be able to hear the bells chime ten times on the other. Thus it is with the mind and the external world. They are separate domains, but events occur simultaneously in them, and so there is no problem in making sense of the world.[15] Dualism has not disappeared from the world; it is still very much with us, particularly within the traditional religions. Whenever an individual speaks of "things of the spirit" as being somehow different from "things of the flesh" he is practicing Cartesianism, whether he knows it or not. Thus there is a fundamental paradox in the hostility of traditional Christianity to Cartesianism.

Other philosophers have attempted to solve the dilemma posed by Descartes' dualism by various "reductionist" arguments, i.e., reducing the world to all mind or all matter. Reductionism leads to

two hostile camps: idealism, on the one hand, which holds that all matter is nothing but a form of mind, and materialism on the other, which makes mind nothing but a form of matter.

Bishop Berkeley, building on Locke's empiricism, worked out a theory of knowledge which held that we can only speak of "things" existing when we perceive them through our senses, and therefore "to be" and "to be perceived" mean exactly the same. This tradition, with many modifications, also continues into our time, notably in phenomenology.

Idealism of this sort was opposed by various forms of materialism, particularly with the tremendous advances witnessed in science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The radical materialists in eighteenth century France solved Cartesian dualism by rejecting out of hand the concept of "mind" and viewing man as L'homme machine. To the materialists, all is matter, there is no soul, and God becomes, in Laplace's words, "an unnecessary hypothesis."[16] Materialistic reductionism leads inevitably to Marx's contention that the mind is nothing but a by-product of bodily organization--a view which modern physiology seems to support--and thus religion is merely verbal opium passed out to keep the masses enslaved. Obviously, materialism has enormous consequences for our time, and is still very much alive in a myriad of forms.

In America during the early years of the twentieth century a number of philosophers grew impatient with both dualism and the

reductionist responses to dualism. These are the philosophical naturalists, and it is in this camp that Morris Cohen found a home. Modern naturalists take the position that anything which man experiences is "natural," that the split between natural and supernatural is merely an error in thinking which results from the notion that there must be a "thing" to correspond to every substantive word in our vocabulary. Joseph Blau puts the naturalistic solution to the problems of dualism this way:

> Traditional philosophy was not satisfied with a human being who performed certain actions and behaved in certain ways--sometimes reflectively, sometimes emotionally, sometimes physically. It broke the whole human being to pieces and assumed that these pieces acted separately, each after its own fashion. Then each piece was given a name--mind, feelings, body--and assumed to be an entity with a life of its own. Finally, it was so far forgotten that there was a whole man that the relations between one piece and another came to be a problem. If we reverse this process and recall to our thought that mind is a name for the whole human being acting reflectively, that feelings are a name for the whole human being acting emotionally, that body is a name for the whole human being acting physically, that, in short, there are not now and never were entities corresponding to the substantive words that we use, there is no longer a mind-body problem.[17]

The naturalists also opposed reductionist solutions to the problem of dualism. Naturalists would agree that anything--be it mental or material--may contain more than we first perceive it to contain, but it can never contain less, and therefore things cannot be reduced to all mental or all material. As one commentator on naturalism put it:

> The nature of anything may of course be, and probably always is, much more than it is empirically found to be. But the point of the argument is that everything is at least what it is given as in experience.[18]

When discussing naturalism it is exceedingly important to note that however much the naturalists may disagree among themselves on their definitions of nature, they are united in a common adherence to the notion that it is unnecessary to go outside of nature to account for anything. Nature includes both things and processes, and it is unnecessary to posit anything supernatural to account for the way things are. Nature includes both growth and decay, life and death, mutability and immutability. It is important to emphasize this because naturalistic philosophy is often confused with materialism. But a thorough-going materialist finds it very difficult to deal with processes and patterns. Ultimately, he is left with things, if he is consistent. The naturalists, building on the advances seen in science in the past two centuries, avoid this difficulty by focusing attention upon the ultimate reality of processes and relations. It would seem that Einstein's theory of relativity supports the naturalistic argument. Modern physics is comprehensible only in terms of the reality of relations, as between matter and energy expressed in $E = Mc^2$. It makes no sense at all in purely materialistic terms.

The method of naturalism is, quite simply, the method of science, i.e., of hypothesis subjected to constant, public verification. Naturalism cannot allow the purely subjective, the mystical, or the intuitive. Truth cannot be arrived at by these methods, any more than

it can be arrived at by falling back on "faith," or by appealing to authority. It must be pointed out, however, that "vision" is very much a part of scientific method (although it often travels under a different name), and hence of philosophical naturalism. What is a hypothesis? Is it not a kind of vision that cannot be explained wholly by "observation of the facts?" Once the hypothesis is posited, however, it becomes necessary to verify it by constantly refined techniques.

At this point we must turn away from naturalism in general and demonstrate how Cohen developed his own variety of this philosophy, which Blau has labelled "Rationalistic Naturalism."[19] As pointed out earlier, Cohen did not leave behind a simple, coherent statement of his philosophical position as the great system-builders of the past did. But if we look carefully at several of his works--notably Reason and Nature, Studies in Philosophy and Science, A Preface to Logic,[20] and a number of other essays scattered about in various learned journals and popular magazines--we can extract, at least in outline, the basis of a coherent, metaphysical position.

Cohen's philosophical position is built upon three assumptions: 1) the validity of logic; 2) the efficacy of scientific method; 3) the value of the principle of polarity as a unifying metaphysical device.

As we pointed out in the previous chapter, Cohen had only one course in philosophy during his undergraduate years, the standard course in logic that used to be required of all college students. The

course itself seems to have had little effect on him, but it did lead him to study Mill, and he became very familiar with Mill's extreme individualism, or atomism. Later, he began the serious study of socialism, and this inevitably led him to Hegel and the neo-Hegelians. These two utterly opposed philosophical positions posed an acute dilemma for Cohen that he struggled with for many years. The force of Mill's logic was difficult to resist, but Cohen "had a vague conviction that there was something radically wrong with Mill's doctrine of induction and his attempt to build up a world out of independent things, facts, or 'states of mind'."[21] Reading Hegel and the neo-Hegelians--notably Watson's Comte, Mill and Spencer and Dewey's Psychology--forced Cohen to see the value in the opposite point of view, viz., that somehow things are connected in the world. But Cohen was also disturbed by a "certain vague, supernatural element"[22] in Hegelianism that ran counter to all he had learned in his study of science. He was unable to reconcile these opposite philosophies and for a very long time was in a "slough of philosophic despond from which desultory reading and agonized efforts at original thought could not extricate me."[23]

It was at this point that he met Davidson and, for a time at least, was able to throw himself into Davidson's "heroic" work and thus put off until a later date the solution to his philosophical dilemma.

In Russell's Principles of Mathematics Cohen discovered a way to unify the Scylla of Mill's atomism and the Charybdis of Hegel's absolutism:

> The demonstration that pure mathematics asserts only logical implications and that such implications or relations cannot be identified with either psychologic or physical events, but are involved as determinants of both, seemed to me to offer a well-grounded and fruitful starting point for philosophy.[24]

This discovery--that mathematics and logic are congruent and that in some unspecified way they bridge the gap between mind and nature--forms the bedrock of Cohen's philosophy. It led Cohen to the belief that relations are real; they exist in a very real sense, although they do not belong wholly to either the mind or to the physical world. Behind this idea looms the figure of Kant. As pointed out earlier, Cohen's doctoral dissertation was concerned with Kantian ethics. Cohen remained a life-long student of Kant, although not a disciple in any slavish sense. Eventually, Cohen rejected the idea of the Ding-an-sich, but Kant's notion that there are general concepts which operate in the field of experience but are not derived from experience itself--the idea the Critique of Pure Reason is built upon--is very close to Cohen's contention that relations are real. Throughout his career, Cohen's contention that logical or mathematical relations are real led many commentators to classify him as a logical realist,[25] or at least as a rationalist of some sort.[26] It must always be kept in mind that whatever label we choose to apply to him, Cohen is pre-eminently a logician.

As a logical realist, Cohen was constrained to reject all forms of nominalism. Under this head he included empiricism, subjective idealism, and positivism. In fact, any metaphysical system that

denied the validity of universals and relations which could ultimately be demonstrated by rational means was anathema to Cohen. Thus Plato also makes up a very large part of Cohen's philosophy.

Cohen was an excellent practitioner of traditional logic, i.e., deductive reasoning based upon Aristotle's Logic. The text book on traditional logic which he and Ernest Nagel published in 1934[27] is still in print, and apparently it is regarded as something more than a curiosity from the past. Cohen was not ignorant of the great advances made in the past century in symbolic logic:

> While the essential elements of the Aristotelian logic have not been overthrown or shaken, the labors of Boole, Peirce, Schroder, Frege, Russell, Whitehead, and a host of fellow workers have produced a calculus of classes and a calculus of propositions in which the Aristotelian theory of the syllogism is seen to occupy only a tiny corner.[28]

Cohen helped form the Association for Symbolic Logic, but by the late 1930's he had become dissatisfied with the preoccupation logicians were showing for symbol manipulation as an end in itself:

> ...many of our most brilliant contemporary logicians have insisted that the subject of their study is simply marks on paper, or symbols generally, without relevance to the objective realities that are explored by the natural and social sciences....Reflection shows that logic cannot be isolated from any realm of being, cannot, for example, be confined to the analysis or description of thought or of symbolism, even assuming it were possible to have thought without objects, or symbols without things symbolized. Indeed, logic could not possibly illumine thoughts and symbols if it did not illumine that which is the object of thought and symbolism. If logic were indeed only a manipulation of symbols it would be as devoid of philosophical significance as chess or tick-tac-toe.[29]

Cohen held on to "the traditional view of logic as the science of valid inference."[30] Although he was aware that modern logic has built up artificial systems that throw out the law of excluded middle--and that these systems sometimes offer fresh insights, in the same way non-Euclidean geometry does--Cohen chose to continue viewing logic as a tool, as a means to find truth, which in turn meant finding out about invariant relations in the world. He was always more interested in applying logical analysis to the world's problems than in playing elaborate games of symbol manipulation, no matter how intrinsically interesting those games might be. The titles of some of his better known essays illustrate how far afield he strayed with logical analysis: "On the Logic of Fiction";[31] "The Place of Logic in the Law";[32] "Logic and the World Order";[33] "The Logic of Critical Judgements in the Arts."[34]

Cohen maintained to the end of his life that "whatever the opinions of philosophers, they must rely on the validity of logical reasoning to establish their position."[35] This belief in the validity of logic is, in Stephen Coburn Pepper's terminology, the "root metaphor" of Cohen's "world hypothesis."[36]

The problem with this claim for the validity of logical reasoning is that it is unprovable in an apodictic sense. At bottom it is, like all "root metaphors," an article of faith, and faith is a word that looms large in Cohen's philosophy. The clearest statement concerning the basis of his entire position occurs in an essay significantly entitled,

"The Faith of a Logician."[37] Cohen was fully aware that rationalism is ultimately incompetent to comprehend the cosmos. Beyond reason there is mysticism, and the tragedy of human existence lies in the fact that reason--our only reliable implement for understanding--might one day prove to be a farce. But that apocalyptic day has not yet arrived, and until it does, man is well-advised to cling to reason:

> Our reason may be a pitiful candle light in the dark and boundless seas of being. But we have nothing better and woe to those who willfully try to put it out.[38]

Thus armed with logic, Cohen entered the philosophic lists. His own method was to subject the claims of others to close, critical examination. It is this method that has led some to view Cohen as a critic only, a Socratic gadfly who had nothing of value of his own to offer. This view is not accurate, however, for there is a consistent Weltansicht in Cohen's critical works, although it is difficult to ferret out at times. The key is Cohen's own idea about the nature of scientific method. This idea is considerably different from the popular view that scientific method is based upon something called "induction." To Cohen, scientific method is simply the application of logic to problems of phenomena. The value of scientific method is the second assumption in Cohen's philosophy.

Science begins with wonder about the world at large and moves on to critical doubt. Once a man doubts the validity of common-sense or traditional explanations, he is launched on a voyage to find new solutions to the problems which existence poses. Cohen follows

Peirce, in other words, in asserting that scientific method is a way to "The Fixation of Belief."[39]

It is foolish to assert that man learns anything by gaping at the world with an empty mind. This, Cohen maintains, is the myth of induction which Francis Bacon foisted upon the world. It is one of the most misleading myths of all time.[40] On this view, Bacon asserted that man begins with a mind which is tabula rasa in the Lockian sense. He then goes into the field and observes "facts." After he accumulates a sufficient body of facts, he simply classifies them according to the schemes laid out in the Novum Organon. He then, through some mysterious inner process, allows the "facts" to speak to him and suggest a working hypothesis. The classic example of the working of the inductive method is supposedly that of Kepler looking at Tycho Brahe's tables of data concerning the motions of heavenly bodies and "seeing" the laws of planetary motion. Cohen contends that this is an utter absurdity: "If ellipses were so obvious in looking at Tycho Brahe's tables, why did not Tycho Brahe himself see them?"[41] The fact is that tables of mathematical data do not suggest anything by themselves, as anyone who has the slightest experience in scientific work knows. Data is always approximate, never exact, and there are also anomalies to contend with. There is another criticism of the popular view of induction, namely, which "facts" do we look for? If a man decides to find out something about birds, for example, he obviously must study birds, and not rocks at the bottom of the sea. Thus, before he goes

into the field to make his observations, he already has some sort of working hypothesis, viz., there is an order of creature we can call a bird, and it is somehow different from rocks, grass, or even insects. The chief distinction between Cohen's view of scientific method and the popular view attributed to Bacon is that Cohen contends there is always some sort of hypothesis present in scientific work, but very often the hypothesis is not made explicit.

Bacon erred, according to Cohen, by assuming the tabula rasa state of the human mind and also by assuming that science begins at the beginning. Instead, science actually jumps into the middle of an age-old stream of general knowledge, armed only with common sense which it must elaborate into a more sophisticated explanation of the nature of things. Most people are untroubled by what confronts them in nature: we still say the sun rises and the sun sets, for example, although this is patently absurd from a scientific point of view. A few men, however, are consumed with doubt, with an itch to know, and thus they overcome their natural state of intellectual "inertia"[42] by hypothesizing new answers to old problems.

Where does hypothesis itself come from? Partially, it comes from the backlog of information which one already possesses, but it also contains an alogical element. As C. F. Delaney has pointed out, Cohen followed DeMorgan's notion that "...hypothesis must have been started not by rule, but by that sagacity of which no description can be

given, precisely because the very owners of it do not act under laws perceptible to themselves."[43]

Cohen uses the example of Herodotus' contemplating the flooding of the Nile to illustrate the coming of doubt and the working of hypothesis.[44] To generations of men, the Nile simply flooded in a predictable pattern. This was a fact, unrelated to other facts in a familiar universe. But to Herodotus, this phenomenon posed a problem which had to be resolved. Now Herodotus knew something about river systems--how they flow, where their water comes from, the working of tributaries, and so forth. He also knew a great deal about such other things in nature as precipitation, wind, and evaporation. Accordingly, Herodotus was able to work out a hypothesis to explain the Nile's periodic flooding by joining this phenomenon to other observed phenomena. It would have been absurd for Herodotus to consider <u>every</u> class of event in working out a hypothesis concerning the periodic flooding of the Nile. Obviously, only certain events are logically relevant, and it was to these that Herodotus directed his attention. Thus, along with an alogical and hence unexplainable component, there is a logical, rational element functioning in the establishment of a hypothesis. As Delaney says, "It is this rational backdrop, rather than unfounded guesses, which orients the forays of creative imagination in the direction of meaningful hypothesis."[45]

Cohen elaborated this process of making rational connections between things into a theory of systematization. There must be a

certain consistency in scientific method which involves placing a given phenomenon in some sort of system. Systematization involves what Smullyan calls the "principle of relationality" in Cohen's work.[46] The principle of relationality holds that a phenomenon "...is either a relation or is analyzable in terms of relation or is at least predictable only in relation to a system."[47] Cohen maintained that the key to understanding scientific method lies in the concept of system, that we must understand a given phenomenon or proposition in terms of what systems are relevant to it:

> When we prove or give evidence for a proposition, we connect it with other propositions according to some logical or rational order so that various propositions support each other; when we make a statement definite or accurate, we make it fit to enter into a logical system as a premise from which precise deductions can be made; and abstract universality is necessary to give us a system which can attain a certain degree of coherent completeness.[48]

It is in terms of logical system that Cohen's debate with Arthur O. Lovejoy must be understood. Lovejoy asserted that an object could not contain contradictory qualities, could not, for example, be red and green at the same time.[49] Cohen declared that it could, provided we carefully distinguish that a given object--or any other phenomenon or proposition--can be conceived as belonging to two separate systems:

> Is there any contradiction in "describing the same object as 'really' possessing simultaneously all the incongruous qualitites which at any given moment appear in the perception of different percipients?" I see no difficulty whatsoever in the same object possessing all sorts of contradictory qualities, provided no two contradictory qualities appear in one point of view or relation. Professor Lovejoy

> admits, for instance, that the same line may simultaneously subtend an angle of 23° from one point of view and 45° from another. Why may not an object be square from one point of view and oblong from another? Why is there not contradiction in the first if there is one in the second? I am told that this question is "a rather curious disregard of the familiar distinction between the relations and the qualities of a thing." Now I am quite willing to confess that I do not pay the usual homage to this familiar distinction, and I hope on some other occasion to pay my respects to its deceptive and treacherous nature....
>
> The difficulty which Professor Lovejoy and others find in conceiving one object possessing contradictory qualities, seems to me to be due to a ghost of the thing-in-itself. "Every real thing," we are told, "has, besides its relations, a 'nature' or character or set of qualities of its own." Now, whatever may be said for the existence of Dinge-an-sich, it seems certain that science does not deal with them, and that none of its objects possesses qualities in isolation but only in given systems. If things could not have contradictory qualities, neither could they have contradictory relations or attributes, and all predication would be impossible. I regard Plato as having cleared this up in controversy with the Megarians.[50]

Logical system is thus the center of Cohen's concept of scientific method. By stating our hypotheses explicitly, we are forced to systematize, and such systematization allows us to eliminate contradictions between propositions included within a given system. In other words, we can think clearly and logically about phenomena only if we make logical connections; we could not do this if all phenomena were viewed as discrete entities, or if, conversely, all phenomena were connected in some sort of grand totality. This, in turn, allows us to see what it is we are dealing with, and on occasion to question our fundamental assumptions. In fact, we can sometimes gain fresh insight by positing the negative of a given proposition, as in non-Euclidean geometry. In Cohen's view, such theoretical practices are really

nothing more than viewing things in terms of different systems. We could not do this if our fundamental assumptions were not stated explicitly in terms of logically relevent systems.

Finally, stating hypotheses in terms of logically relevant systems allows us to apply various tests of verifiability and thus to achieve a certain degree of predictability. When a hypothesis can neither be proved nor disproved--which is quite often the case in science--we can sometimes gain insight by testing the implications of the hypothesis for verifiability, and thus reach at least tentative conclusions. Tests for verifiability always depend upon the law of excluded middle, and are therefore rigorously logical. Such a method cannot establish the absolute truth of the original hypothesis, but it can yield a very good indication that one theory is preferable to another in terms of probability.

Cohen went so far as to suggest that as science develops, it becomes increasingly deductive. The alogical element in hypothesizing never disappears, of course, but it retreats further and further into the background and the truly deductive nature of scientific method becomes clearer and clearer. He illustrated the working of deduction in scientific method in this way:

> I observe that X, Y and Z, suffering from pneumonia, have all been cured by serum A, and I infer that all pneumonia patients will be so cured. Here the conclusion will obviously be true only if X, Y and Z are typical samples of the whole class of pneumonia patients and do not form a special class having some distinctive trait that makes the serum effective only in their case. The generalization therefore that the serum is effective in all cases of

> pneumonia patients is in this respect homogeneous. If this is made explicit we have the orthodox syllogism:
> a) A cure for X, Y and Z is a cure for all pneumonia patients.
> b) Serum A is a cure for X, Y and Z.
> c) Therefore, serum A is a cure for all pneumonia patients.[51]

Such a process is too often called inductive, Cohen maintained, because the major premise is rarely made explicit. Critical reflection upon the whole process of scientific method, however, reveals that this is the way scientists "do" science, although their syllogisms are often elliptical: either the major or minor premise is left unstated. Thus there is really no such thing as "inductive" reasoning in scientific method; processes which masquerade under this name are merely unexamined and rather sloppy uses of classical syllogisms.

To summarize: 1) scientific method arises from critical doubt about commonly accepted explanations; 2) it proceeds by stating a hypothesis explicitly, when it is done properly; 3) the hypothesis comprises both alogical and logical elements; 4) the alogical elements remain a mystery; 5) the logical elements result from a rational systematization of our knowledge; 6) the hypothesis is tested by examining it deductively to see what predictive value it has; 7) some sense of the probability of a given proposition is thus reached, and we can at least tentatively fix belief.

Cohen's critical examination of scientific method led him to the principle of polarity, which is generally conceded to be his most important contribution to modern philosophy. The principle of polarity

is the third and final assumption upon which he built his naturalistic metaphysic.

From the very beginning, philosophers have attempted to find a single, unifying principle that would bring order to the world's chaos. "All things are made of water," Thales of Miletus supposedly said,[52] and thus began the study of metaphysics, which is, in Whitehead's words, the study of "...the final real things of which the world is made."[53] Too often this search for "the final real things of which the world is made" has resulted, according to Cohen, in various forms of "monistic mania." His own study led him to suggest a metaphysical principle that, at one and the same time, provides a certain sense of unity, and also allows for contraries in the world of possibility. Cohen called this the principle of polarity.

"The principle of polarity," Cohen declared;

> is suggested by the phenomena of magnetism where north and south pole are always distinct, opposed, yet inseparable. We can see it in general physics where there is no action without reaction, no force or cause of change without inertia or resistance. In biology the life of every organism involves action and reaction with an environment. There is no growth without decay, or as Huxley puts it, protoplasm manages to live only by continually dying. This suggests a supplement to the principle of causality. Not only must every natural event have a cause which determines that it should happen, but the cause must be opposed by some factor which prevents it from producing any greater effect than it actually does. A physical or chemical system has the precise rate of change that it has, an organism attains its specific form at any moment, a social movement has just the effect or influence which it in fact has, because of the presence of certain opposing or balancing factors necessary to produce the definite result.[54]

In many ways, the principle of polarity is not new. It rejuvenates a multitude of ideas thought to be buried in the distant past. Anaximander, the second philosopher of the Milesian school, reacted to Thales' unitary idea of water as the primal substance by positing a "Boundless" substance of his own which is infinite, eternal, and ageless. Somehow, "stresses" arise within the "Boundless" and wet, dry, hot, and cold separate out. They mix together, and form all things. Thus change is created in the strife of opposites, and the world and all its creatures evolve into being, only to pass back into the Boundless.[55] Again, the idea of perpetual flux advanced by Heraclitus is remarkably similar to Cohen's principle of polarity. "Men do not know," says Heraclitus, "how what is at variance agrees with itself. It is an attunement of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre."[56] There is unity in the world, but it is a unity that results from diversity:

> Couples are things whole and things not whole, what is drawn together and what is drawn asunder, the harmonious and the discordant.... Good and ill are one.... The way up and the way down is one and the same.... It is the opposite which is good for us.[57]

The idea of mutability and immutability, life and death, being ineffably linked is expressed in the final quatrain and couplet of Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 as perfectly as it has ever been expressed in English:

> In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
> That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,

As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

The connection of the principle of polarity to the Hegelian dialectic is immediately obvious, but there is a critical distinction between Cohen's view and Hegel's:

> ...the principle of polarity is not the same as that of the Hegelian dialectic. In the first place the distinction between the formal and the material, between logical categories and historical existences, removes the Hegelian confusion in which concrete things seem to be generated in time either by ghostly conflicts or by sublimated matings of abstract categories.... We may be taking Hegel's metaphors too literally; but the confusion needs to be eliminated in any case....the principle of polarity leads to a more emphatic denial of identity between opposite categories like being and nonbeing. The opposition between contrary categories is neither absorbed nor in any way transcended by their unity, any more than abstract unity can be generated by abstract difference. The opposing considerations involved in all existences (like the north and south pole of a magnet) are different aspects which never become identical though they necessarily coexist.[58]

Thus there is no synthesis in Cohen's principle of polarity, as there is in Hegel's dialectic. Opposite categories remain opposite, though they are eternally linked in some ineffable way. The linkage is probably better expressed by Heraclitus' metaphor of the lyre strings than by any other descriptive metaphor suggested in the past two-and-a-half millenia. We must be aware, however, that all metaphors are only very crude approaches to the truth. Plato's Allegory of the Cave approaches realism: it does not describe it.

The question of whether Cohen's principle of polarity is an adequate metaphysical explanation is far beyond the purview of this

dissertation, so we shall not proceed any further than this. However, as a heuristic device, the principle of polarity proved to be very fruitful. Cohen was of course intimately aware of the heuristic value of the principle of polarity:

> The principle of polarity, of necessary opposition in all determinate effects, thus becomes a heuristic principle directing our inquiry in the search for adequate explanations. Hence, if we pass from the realm of natural events, where reigns the principle of causality, to the wider realm of all possible objects of consideration governed by the principle of sufficient reason, our principle of polarity becomes a supplement to the latter. It then asserts that in all determinations there are opposing elements or categories, such as unity and plurality, identity and difference, activity and passivity.[59]

The principle of polarity served Cohen well for some thirty years. Along with scientific method--in which it has its origin--it is the key to understanding his criticisms of various institutions, ideas, and practices. Invariably, he does two things when he approaches a question. First, he attempts to make explicit the hypothesis upon which the institution, law, or whatever, is built. Quite often, this exposure itself is enough to betray the weaknesses of an argument. Secondly, once the basic principles are understood, Cohen posits their opposites as possibilities for discussion in the real world. More often than not, this method of attack yielded excellent results, either by exposing past errors or by suggesting new ways of beholding existence. In a later chapter we will closely examine Cohen's use of the principle of polarity in the political sphere.

Triply armed with logic, scientific method, and the principle of polarity, Cohen ventured into one field after another, forcing each to submit to a rigorous, logical analysis. Thus there is a kind of strange unity in his various works, although it is a unity of method rather than a unity of subject matter. Logic and scientific method give us a means of dealing with the world in a systematic way, and the principle of polarity:

> ...puts us on guard against two opposite evil intellectual habits: on the one hand to regard real difficulties as absolute impossibilities, and on the other to belittle such difficulties by calling them false alternatives.[60]

The way of science becomes the way of liberalism:

> The fanatic clings to certain beliefs and in their defense is ready to shut the gates of mercy on mankind, precisely because he cannot see any alternative to them except utter chaos or iniquity. Rational reflection, however, makes us see other possibilities and opens our minds to the thought that some of the moral or physical principles that seem to us self-evident may be only sanctified taboos or inherited conventions.[61]

This concludes our general analysis of Cohen's philosophy. The remainder of the dissertation is devoted to the functioning of this philosophy in the world of liberalism.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER III

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36. Stephen C. Pepper, World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1966), passim.

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40. Cohen, "Bacon and the Inductive Method," in Studies in Philosophy and Science, pp. 99-106.

41. Ibid., 67-68.

42. Morris R. Cohen, The Meaning of Human History (Lasalle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1947), passim.

43. C. F. Delaney, Mind and Nature: A Study of the Naturalistic Philosophy of Cohen, Woodbridge, and Sellars (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 66. I have relied rather heavily on Delaney's analysis of Cohen's conception of scientific method, although I take exception to some of his final judgments.

44. Cohen and Nagel, Logic and Scientific Method, pp. 199-200.

45. Delaney, Mind and Nature, p. 68.

46. Arthur Francis Smullyan, "The Philosophical Method of Morris R. Cohen," in Salo W. Baron, Ernest Nagel, and Koppel S. Pinson, eds., Freedom and Reason: Studies in Philosophy and Jewish Culture in Memory of Morris Raphael Cohen (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951), pp. 59-67.

47. Ibid., 61.

48. Cohen, Reason and Nature, pp. 106-107.

49. Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Secondary Qualities and Subjectivity," Journal of Philosophy, vol. X, p. 216.

50. Morris R. Cohen, "The Supposed Contradiction in the Diversity of Secondary Qualities--A Reply," Journal of Philosophy, vol. X, pp. 511-512.

51. Cohen, Studies in Philosophy and Science, pp. 11-12.

52. Russell, Wisdom of the West, p. 16.

53. Manley Thompson, "Metaphysics," in Roderick M. Chisholm, et al., Philosophy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 128.

54. Cohen, Studies in Philosophy and Science, pp. 11-12.

55. Russell, Wisdom of the West, pp. 24-29.

56. Ibid., 43.

57. Ibid., 44.

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59. Ibid., 12.

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61. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 176.

# CHAPTER IV

# THE LIBERAL TEMPER

## A PROBLEM IN SEMANTICS

Morris Cohen unashamedly characterized himself as a political liberal. Many of his mature works concerned contemporary political matters, and Cohen's adherence to logic, scientific method, and the principle of polarity led him to conclusions regarding human welfare which are generally classified as belonging to the liberal political camp. The choice of this term to describe a complex, metaphysically-based theory of politics was an unfortunate one--although it made perfect sense thirty or forty years ago. Today, however, the terms "liberal" and "liberalism" are so laden with social connotations that there is very little agreement upon their precise definitions. In general, it can be said that liberalism is currently a term of opprobrium to both the "left" and the "right." Virtually no commentator on politics--and certainly no aspiring politician--dares to risk being tagged with the name "liberal."

Before discussing how this came about, we must digress for a moment and reflect upon certain linguistic problems that seem to persist in human history. The spokesmen of every age use a number of key terms that have meaning for that age and no other. Rarely are these key words, or "magic words"[1] as Carl Becker calls them, defined with any degree of precision. It is an exceedingly difficult

task for the historian to ferret out the fullness of meaning of such terms, but unless he does it is impossible for him to understand the intellectual temper of an age. As Becker pointed out, in the thirteenth century the literature of philosophy, theology (if we can separate the two), and even a nascent science is permeated with such words as God, sin, and grace. To be sure, scholastic philosophers made a huge effort to define terms precisely--ideally by placing a given term in its genus and adding the proper differentia. But always there was an implicit assumption that certain words--God, to take the most obvious example--had definitions which every sensible person in Christendom accepted. Consider, for example, St. Thomas' famous definition of natural law:

> Since all things subject to Divine providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law...; it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share in the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law.[2]

This is a splendid example of scholastic definition. Unfortunately, it is almost incomprehensible to the modern mind. What is the precise meaning of Eternal Reason, for example, or Divine providence, or eternal law? Aquinas does not say; he does not have to: these terms are so much a part of the "climate of opinion" of his age that they require no definition.

By the eighteenth century, scholastic terms--among certain intellectuals at least--have given way to a new lexicon. Nature, spelled with a capital N, perfectibility, humanity, and the like now become the touchstones. Aquinas would certainly recognize some eighteenth century terms: natural law is still very much a part of the language. But this musty old term takes on an entirely new meaning in the Age of Reason. By this time, Newton has replaced Aristotle, and the Deists' metaphor of the Divine Clock has taken the place of the Great Chain of Being. Natural law is now something to be discovered by means quite foreign to the philosophia perennis.

In the nineteenth century, along with coal, iron, steam engines, and Mr. Darwin's Galapagos collections, another new lexicon comes into being. Fact, matter, evolution, and progress now fill the pages of a rapidly growing mountain of books and journals.

Our century presents as vexing a problem in this crucial area as it does in all other phases of human existence. In the first place, there has been the great schism between something called "science" and all other provinces of understanding. There are indeed, as C. P. Snow has taken pains to point out,[3] two distinct cultures of thinking men. The confusion does not end with a simple bifurcation into "science" and "non-science", however, for each of the so-called disciplines has perversely generated its own new vocabulary. Without question, there are perfectly sound reasons for the use of a good many technical terms in contemporary discourse. In physics and related

fields a lexical system has developed that seems to work quite well. Such terms as ergs, microns, ohms, joules, field forces, and so on, refer to precise quantities of matter and energy, or to repeatable processes of some sort. There is nothing subjective about these terms, nothing connotative, and hence there is common agreement upon what they mean.

The natural sciences lag somewhat behind the physical sciences in this most important area. A plant, for example, that is verrucose to one botanist might just possibly be verruculose to another equally competent man. Gray's Manual of Botany uses sixty separate and disputed terms (like the two above) to state that the stem of a plant is not smooth.[4] One cannot help wondering if this sort of linguistic proliferation actually aids human understanding. It may very well be that there is a point where the creation of new terms becomes counter-productive, and some other system of identification might be preferred.

When we turn to the social sciences, the situation becomes chaotic. How, for example, does one measure various degrees of "cultural deprivation?" What does "stability" really mean? What is a "value?" It must be admitted that social scientists have attempted valiantly to define their terms precisely, but it still seems there is a great amount of confusion whenever such terms appear in print. Perhaps we will learn once again, as men learned when the vulgar

languages replaced Latin, that a great deal of careless or mediocre thinking can be camouflaged by technical language.

The problem of linguistic obfuscation is further complicated by the presence of the mass media. It is a commonplace to assert that at no time in human history has the ordinary man been assaulted by such a constant bombardment of ill-considered words. One might paraphrase Winston Churchill by saying that never have so many learned so little from hearing so much. Perhaps all this will lead one day to Marshall McLuhan's cherished vision of a Global Village.[5] At present, however, it seems that the huge increase in verbal output witnessed in the past few decades is leading only to greater confusion, alienation, and chaos.

This lengthy digression should have made clear the simple fact that words--even words with a high frequency of usage--can be very deceiving. All too often, they reflect the unexamined sentiments of an era, or rely upon subjective considerations, and thus do not always serve to communicate ideas. With this in mind, we can return to a discussion of liberalism.

## LIBERALISM IN POPULAR DISCOURSE

Few terms seem to fall with greater frequency from the lips of virtually every commentator in contemporary America than "liberal" and "liberalism." Daily, we hear of liberal legislatures, liberal school systems, and liberal interpretations of the Bible, the Constitution, and the City Charter. Periodically, some savant

informs the public that "liberalism is dead," as Theodore Lowi in The End of Liberalism[6] and Robert Paul Wolff in The Poverty of Liberalism[7] did. The "death-of-liberalism" thesis is not confined to rarely-read scholarly treatises, however. In a recent issue of Playboy magazine--of all places--Jack Newfield published a long essay on the same theme, entitled, appropriately enough, "The Death of Liberalism."[8] Whether or not liberalism is really dead is a question that will not be answered here. There can be no disputing of the fact, however, that the term itself is very much with us.

Any dictionary will assure a reader that liberal and liberalism have precise, denotative meanings, but somehow the dictionary definitions do not satisfy. Like most political terms, these two depend upon a whole web of social connotations, attitudes, and prejudices in actual use. This is why William F. Buckley, Jr., can always say "liberal" with a haughty sneer and be assured that his auditors and readers will know what he means.[9] At the other end of the political spectrum, the spokesmen for the New Left consistently use "liberal" as a term worthy of nothing but contempt. And a Vice-president of the United States felt quite confident in erecting an entire political campaign around the emotion-laden but undefined term "radical-liberal," or, in its Orwellian form, "Radiclib." Mr. Agnew, incidentally, neglected to mention the fact that his speech writers plagiarized the term radical-liberal from the title of a book by one of those very people he so vociferously anathematized in the election campaign of 1970.[10]

The President of the United States in 1971--the time of this writing--is generally conceded to be more "conservative" than his immediate predecessors, and yet one of the leading young journalists of the day wrote an entire book around the thesis that Richard Nixon is the "last of the great liberals."[11]

"Liberalism" and "conservatism" are touchstones for this age, as God and grace were for the High Middle Ages. Whatever else this age might be, it is most emphatically an age of politics, so it is not surprising that political terms make up such a large part of the daily lexicon. The remainder of this chapter, and the two chapters following, are devoted to an analysis of the meaning of liberalism.

The word liberal comes into current English from Latin via Middle English and Old French. Its root is liber, or freedom. Hence the term is somehow associated with the idea of freedom. It was not used in English as a political term until the early decades of the nineteenth century,[12] however, when the Spanish Liberales party captured the European imagination by advocating a constitutional government for despotic Spain.[13] For some time after this event, the term carried with it a pejorative meaning. It seemed to imply license of all sorts, rather than legitimate freedom. It was associated in the minds of many with the excesses of the French Revolution, and the spectres of the guillotine and Napoleon prevented it from being accepted as a term of approval for a political system aimed at maximizing human freedom. Cardinal Newman, for example, wrote that "The more

serious thinkers among us are used...to regard the spirit of Liberalism as characteristic of the destined Antichrist."[14] By the time of the publication of Mill's On Liberty in 1859, however, a shift in meaning seems to have occurred. Mill used liberalism in an approbative sense in On Liberty[15] as well as in the Autobiography.[16] It is probably safe to assume that it was Mill's use of the term that gave it its firm place in the political lexicon of the modern world.

A parallel development seems to have occurred in the United States. Although "liberty" is a very common term in American political writing throughout the eighteenth century, we do not find "liberalism" in frequent usage much before the end of the Civil War. As Eric Goldman has pointed out, however, the word "liberal" becomes increasingly important in the rhetoric of the anti-Grant movement, until in 1871 the anti-Grant forces joined together to form the "Liberal Republican Party."[17] From this date on, "liberal" and "liberalism" have occupied conspicuous places in the political language of the nation.

Many of the ideas that have come to be associated with liberalism pre-date by centuries the acceptance of the term. Certainly the fundamental postulate of liberalism--that human freedom is the highest value--has a very long history. Men as far removed in time as Socrates, Milton, and Holmes have argued eloquently for free expression as an essential manifestation of the desideratum of human freedom. It would be easy to lump such men together, and call them

all "liberals." Indeed, at least one historian of liberalism, J. Salwyn Schapiro, has taken this tack.[18] Such a broad method of categorization does not seem particularly illuminating, however, for obviously Socrates, Milton, and Holmes, like all men, responded in some measure to their own times, and their times were so utterly different that it is doubtful if one of the three would have found anything at all recognizable in the ages of the others. Similarities there may be among them, but their differences are so overwhelming that it does no good to classify them together, simply as representatives of "liberalism."

However, if one takes a slightly different tack, there does seem to be a way to deal with the idea of liberalism through the ages. Instead of viewing liberalism as a single continuum stretching from Athens to America, we have taken the view that there are three discernible phases of liberalism in the western world. The common denominator in all three cases is a preoccupation with the problem of human freedom. Let it be emphasized once again that this is the central issue of liberalism, but it is dealt with in completely different ways in the different phases.

Liberalism is a state of mind, a psychological temper, that takes various forms at various times. But always there is something constant. The liberal temper constantly aims at removing impediments from the lives of men in order to allow them to live freely. At one point in time, the major impediments facing humankind seemed to

flow from the excesses of government. Accordingly, liberalism sought to remove these impediments by positing a theory of government that was essentially negative. It resulted in the extreme laissez faire doctrines of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In time, it became clear that the pendulum had swung too far, that by weakening government, men had been left vulnerable to other forces seeking to impede their free development. These new impediments--in the form of huge, uncontrolled accumulations of capital--forced those infected with the liberal temper to turn from their by now "traditional" theory of negative government to a wholly new theory of a government which acts vigorously in support of previously undreamed-of programs to enhance human freedom. As Schapiro said "Laissez faire, a revolutionary doctrine in the eighteenth century, a liberal one in the nineteenth, was repudiated as a reactionary one in the twentieth."[19] In other words, the liberal temper has constantly changed the focus of its attack as more and more is learned about the forces that control men's destinies. The willingness to change, to try new things as new situations arise, and new information becomes available, is perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the liberal temper. It is also what makes it very difficult to label liberalism as just another ideology competing for men's allegiance.

Before Morris Cohen can be placed in the liberal tradition, it is vitally important that we understand as much as possible of the liberal temper which developed before his time. As pointed out

before, there are three discernible phases of liberalism in the western world. These phases can be labeled: 1) the phase of prophetic liberalism; 2) the phase of bourgeois liberalism; 3) the phase of welfare liberalism. The first phase--the phase of prophetic liberalism--will be examined in the remainder of this chapter. The other two phases will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

It is important to note that these categories are not always mutually exclusive; they overlap and often coexist. For example, in our time, which can be taken as the dawn of the phase of welfare liberalism, many vestiges of the older bourgeois liberalism still persist. At any meeting of businessmen one can hear sentiments expressed that would be wholly familiar to Adam Smith. Nevertheless, welfare liberalism grows apace, while bourgeois liberalism continues to decline. We should also enter another caveat here: no attempt has been made in the following discussion to work out a grand Hegelian synthesis of some sort. We do not see welfare liberalism as the absolute and necessary end of all that has gone before. As mentioned earlier, Cohen himself was not at all certain that liberal civilization would endure forever. The future of western liberalism remains an enigma. With these qualifications in mind, we can proceed to analyze the various phases of the liberal temper.

## FIVE PROPHETS OF LIBERALISM

Throughout most of human history the idea of freedom for individuals has not been a positive value. Instead, the pages of history

are filled with all sorts of tribal, religious, and political despotisms. The twentieth century has not been immune in this regard either. In virtually every age, however, there have been individuals who, for various reasons, refused to submit to prevailing opinion, and instead asserted a belief in the efficacy of freedom. Such individuals do not belong wholly to their own age, or to ours. On the other hand, they could not be avoided in their own time, and they refuse to be disregarded in ours. Their voices rumble down through the years like distant thunder on a summer afternoon: perhaps not of immediate concern, but insistent and implacable. These are the voices of the men we have chosen to call the prophets of liberalism.

Socrates, speaking in the Apology, might be taken as one of the first and one of the greatest of the prophets of liberalism:

> Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: "You, my friend--a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens--are you not ashamed of heaping up the greatest amount of money and honor and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all?" And if the person with whom I am arguing, says: "Yes, but I do care:" then I do not leave him or let him go at once; but I proceed to interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue in him, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the greater and overvaluing the less. And I shall repeat the same words to everyone whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren. For know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought of your

> properties, but first and chiefly to care about the great improvement of the soul. I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, I am a mischievous person. But if anyone says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth. Wherefore, O men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; but whichever you do, understand that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times.[20]

These are strong words for the loyal citizen who fought so well at Potidaea, Amphipolis, and Delium to protect that state which was now about to sentence him to death. The inherent injustice in this process was not Socrates' concern: ideas of natural law and natural justice lay far in the future. Socrates was led by reason, and reason demanded that he be allowed to speak freely. He held fast to the idea of free expression, even though it cost him his life. We would of course be wrong to link ideas in Athenian civilization too closely with ideas in the contemporary western world, regardless of how popular the notion of "Athens as the birthplace of democracy" might be. Socrates' defense of slavery, for example, or his idea of "virtue," or the notion of Greeks and "barbarians" are ideas quite foreign to us. Nevertheless, Socrates' defense of free expression has contributed greatly to the growth of the liberal temper. It is a seminal idea that simply refuses to go away.

Judging by the number of books issued in the past few years on Lucretius and the <u>De Rerum Natura</u>, there is considerable interest in looking more closely at either this great and perplexing poem, or at

the Epicurean philosophy which lies behind it. There is much in the De Rerum Natura that is absurd in light of modern physics--regardless of Lucretius' insistence upon the atomic nature of the universe--but there is also much that speaks very directly to the modern mind. We can put aside Lucretius' theory of physics, if we wish, and dismiss his obeisance to the Roman pantheon, and there is still much that is attractive to the liberal temper:

> Our terrors and our darkness of mind
> Must be dispelled, then, not by sunshine's rays,
> Not by those shining arrows of the light,
> But by insight into nature, and a scheme
> Of systematic contemplation.[21]

These lines reveal one of the grand themes of the De Rerum Natura: it is in man's power to put away superstition and fear, to break the shackles that bind him to the dead past and the corrupt present, and systematically to work out ways of controlling his own destiny. Lucretius was pre-eminently a rationalist. He accepted the evidence of his senses and sought to explain the world in natural, not supernatural, terms, to "release the mind from care and terror" by facing the problems of life and death, mortality and immortality, with courage and reason. All this was of course anathema to the religious fanatics of his own time--and to those of times long after his death. Nevertheless, Lucretius, like Socrates, honestly followed the dictates of reason. As one of his many translators put it:

> He has left us a most precious heritage of freedom--the freedom of reason to explore to the uttermost--and he stands forth from the Roman scene, easily as one of

> Rome's most illustrious figures.... We recognize the errors in his thinking, but far more important than that, we know, now more fully than ever before, the truth that lies in the De Rerum Natura.[22]

The truth comprehended by Lucretius is simply this: there is a world of things which man can understand; it is in man's power, on the one hand, to find delight in contemplating those things in all their grandeus, and on the other, to bend them to his use. "Man is the measure," Lucretius might have said, and though he is mortal, he need not be a slave. Surely, this is one of the great prophets of liberalism.

Among the early Fathers of the Christian Church, Origen stands out as a prolific writer (he is reported to have written some 6000 books--more, even, than Cotton Mather); as a highly controversial figure, often condemned as a heretic; and as a prophet of religious liberalism. Although the most devout of men, Origen, like Spinoza, attempted to discard everything that could not be reconciled with reason. Origen's Christianity was rational and ethical; he rejected much that was orthodox in his day and for a thousand years thereafter. "He was," in one historian's words, "the first Christian liberal."[23]

Perhaps the most fascinating volumes in Origen's works are his commentaries on Holy Scripture. These commentaries have been interpreted in two different ways. Writers within the Roman Catholic tradition have more or less consistently viewed them as examples of Christian mysticism; writers outside the Church have taken them to be highly personal, allegorical explanations of imaginative literature.

No matter which view one takes, an important fact emerges: Origen did not accept Holy scripture in an orthodox and literal manner. He once wrote of Holy Scripture, "There are some passages which are not literally true, but absurd and impossible."[24] He saw stories in both the Old and New Testaments as too fanciful to be taken seriously:

> What man of sense will suppose that the first and second and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without sun, moon, and stars? Or that God walked in a garden in the evening and that Adam hid himself under a tree? Or that the devil took Jesus into a high mountain, whence he could see the kingdoms of the Persians, and Scythians and Indians?[25]

These lines from De Principiis show that Origen's liberal interpretations of Scripture were very far ahead of his time. The good citizens of Dayton, Tennessee, had not yet reached this level of sophistication in 1925. Origen's insistence upon rationality and personal interpretation of Scripture, as well as his rejection of blind obedience to authority, anticipate many of the themes of Luther, the Reformation, and Protestantism in general.

Origen's liberalism carried over into his teaching. It is wholly reasonable to view him as an early proponent of academic freedom. One student, Gregory Thaumaturgus, said of Origen's teaching:

> There was no subject forbidden us, nothing hidden or inaccessible. We were allowed to be acquainted with every doctrine, barbarian or Greek, on things spiritual or civil, divine and human, traversing with all freedom and investigating the whole circuit of knowledge, and satisfying ourselves with the full enjoyment of all the pleasures of the soul.[26]

Currently, Origen's life and teachings are being re-evaluated. Some historians already view him as a greater figure, intellectually,

than Augustine.[27] It is fascinating to speculate upon how different the course of human history might have been had the Church followed the teachings of Origen instead of the teachings of Augustine. Whether or not Origen proves to be a greater figure than Augustine, is a question that must be answered in the future. There can be no doubt, however, that he was a far greater prophet of liberalism.

Erasmus has always presented something of a problem. As Rabelais said, Erasmus was wont to defend his beliefs "this side of burning." He was a gentle man compared, say, to Luther, and chose the way of dispassionate Christian Humanism rather than the way of revolution. Certainly there is nothing "heroic" about Erasmus; he preferred his study to the streets, and his aloofness from the imbroglios of his day has caused some to view him as wanting in courage.

And yet, few men stand out as greater prophets of liberalism, for though he generally refused to enter the public forum, his biting satires profoundly influenced events in his lifetime and down through the ages. In many ways, Erasmus was a direct heir of Origen. Like Origen, he sought a synthesis of Hellenism and Hebraism, or, as one commentator on the period put it, "...he conceived it his mission to Christianize the Renaissance and to humanize Christianity."[28] But Erasmus took the way of reform from within, rather than revolution. He saw much that was evil in the world, and particularly in the Church. In Praise of Folly satirized, among other things, scholastic

philosophers, ignorant friars, and the selling of indulgences. Even the popes came in for criticism:

> "Now, as to the popes of Rome, who pretend themselves Christ's vicars: if they would imitate his exemplary life by preaching incessantly, by taking up with poverty, nakedness, hunger, and contempt of the world; if they did but consider the import of the word pope, which signifies 'father'...there would be no such vigorous making of parties and buying of votes in the conclave;...and those who by bribery should get themselves elected would never secure their sitting firm in the chair by pistol, poison, and violence. How much of their pleasure would be abated if they were endowed with one dram of wisdom? Wisdom, did I say? Nay with one gram of that salt which our saviour bid them not lose the savor of. In place of their riches, honors, jurisdictions, Peter's pence, offices, dispensations, licenses, indulgences, would succeed watchings, fastings, tears, prayers, sermons, hard studies, repentant sighs, and a thousand such severe penalties; nay, what is yet more deplorable, it would follow that all their clerks, notaries, advocates, grooms, ostlers, lackeys, pimps, and some others whom for modesty's sake I shall not mention... would all lose their employments."[29]

That Erasmus could escape the Inquisition after writing satires like this is indeed amazing. He was able to because the satires were written in such a way that it was virtually impossible to accuse Erasmus himself of holding heretical views. After all, it was Dame Folly who made the above speech, and what sensible person would listen to her?

The satires of Erasmus were not merely negative criticisms; whenever he pointed a finger at corrupt practices, he pointed another at a better way to do things. Not only was the "Prince of Learning" a social critic: he was also a progressive reformer, but a reformer who refused to justify means by ends. He would not accept the dogmas

of any party, insisting instead upon making up his own mind. He consistently chose the way of freedom, and in this he has earned a place among the prophets of liberalism. Bratton's summary of the influence of Erasmus seems particularly apt:

> As the smoke of battle clears, his liberalism becomes increasingly transparent. If any doubt should exist as to that, one need only note the source of opposition to his teaching on the one hand, and the character of his followers on the other. Branded by the Catholic Church as a heretic and atheist and his complete works placed on the Index Expurgatorius, Erasmus has become in the minds of all liberal-minded individuals...the most brilliant star of the Renaissance....[30]

One more prophet of liberalism needs to be mentioned before going on to an analysis of bourgeois and welfare liberalism. John Milton lived at a time when much of the world was rent asunder with fiercely passionate wars of religion. In his own country, Milton chose to throw in his lot with the Puritan party, and between 1641 and 1660, he gave himself up almost entirely to pamphleteering in behalf of religious and civil liberty. In a vast array of brilliant essays, Milton argued for one cause after another. Interestingly, there is a steady "leftward" growth in Milton's writings on politics and religion.[31] He begins arguing only for certain kinds of freedom, but finds as he goes along that it becomes more and more difficult to support freedom in one case and deny it in another. He does not follow through completely on this line of reasoning, however, for eventually even Milton had to call a halt. By the end of his life he agreed that certain restraints were necessary, that there were, in fact, books which were

so dangerous to morality and religion in general that they had to be censored. In this he anticipated Locke who urged in the Letter Concerning Toleration that all religious views be tolerated, except those of Catholics and atheists.

Like Erasmus, Milton attacked the excesses of the priests, in "Lycidas" as well as in such tracts as Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England and Reason of Church Government. The divorce tracts, Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce, The Judgement of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce, Tetrachordon, and Colasterion show a second aspect of Milton's prophetic liberalism. Milton argued in these tracts that divorce should be permitted for reasons other than adultery, that to force people to remain prisoners of a loveless marriage was a hideous offense against human dignity. For his efforts, he was attacked by both Puritans and Cavaliers.

Milton's best known tracts, of course, are Of Education and Areopagitica. In Of Education, Milton suggested some much needed reforms in the kind of Gradgrind system of education which then held sway in the British schools. Most significantly, he urged that science be given a larger place in the curriculum than it then occupied.

Areopagitica is one of the most precious documents in Anglo-American history. For our purposes, two things stand out about Areopagitica. In the first place, Milton defended the right of free expression as eloquently as Socrates did before the Athenian assembly. There is a second factor, however, that is equally

important to an analysis of the liberal temper. In 1637, the Star Chamber placed in the hands of Archbishop Laud virtual control over everything that was published in England. The Long Parliament abolished the Star Chamber in 1642. Predictably, however, the Presbyterians turned right around and established their own system of censorship with the Licensing Act of 1643. Milton had argued against the Star Chamber and Archbishop Laud. Now he found it necessary to argue against his own party. That he was willing to defend principle, even when he was forced to do battle with his own people, gives him an honored place among the prophets of liberalism. Censorship cannot be allowed, Milton said, because to kill a book is tantamount to killing reason itself:

> I deny not, but that it is of greatest concernment in the church and commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors; for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth: and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burthen to the earth; but a good book is the precious lifeblood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life....
>
> We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martydom; and if it extend to the whole impression,

> a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself, slays an immortality rather than a life.[32]

Areopagitica had only a small effect in its own time: it did not bring a sudden end to censorship. The tract has never been forgotten, however, and it continues to exercise tremendous appeal for the liberal temper down to the present.

Many other figures could be cited as prophets of liberalism. Certainly Abelard belongs to this group, as does Spinoza. To Morris Cohen, in fact, Spinoza was the most important of all the prophets of liberalism. But very little would be gained by heaping up more examples. The figures cited here are vastly different in temperament, in philosophy, and in time. It is difficult to imagine what the conversation would consist of if Socrates, Lucretius, and Milton magically found themselves seated side-by-side, even if they managed to overcome the language barrier. Obviously, the differences among an Athenian of the Golden Age, a Roman citizen at the time of Caesar, and a seventeenth century English Puritan are enormous.

And yet there are similarities that justify us in calling them all prophets of liberalism. The first thing that unites them is their fundamental belief in human freedom. It is very significant to observe that different men, reacting to utterly different political, philosophical, and religious situations came to conclusions that are remarkably similar. These lonely voices cry out for freedom, and if this sounds too polemical, one need think only of the climate of intolerance in which

they lived to see how lonely their voices must have been. In our time, talk about freedom sometimes seems trite. In theirs, such advocacy was exceedingly dangerous.

The second thing that unites them is their fundamental faith in reason. Ultimately, the appeal of all these men was to the force of rationality, as set against the combined powers of superstition and intolerance. This, too, is most significant, for reason is central to the liberal temper.

Finally, we should note that there is a spirit of accomodation, of compromise, of reform in the writings of these men. The right of revolution is a basic tenet of the liberal temper, as it is set forth in Locke's Second Treatise and in the Declaration of Independence. But revolution, or the threat of revolution, is something that in general remains in the background of the liberal temper. The possibility is always there, and is even eloquently defended at times, but the more usual course is to seek accomodation and reform within the existing framework. Socrates refused to recant, but he also defended the right of the Athenian assembly to put him to death.

These three clusters of ideas--individual striving for freedom, rationality, and a spirit of reform--are the raw materials out of which liberalism is made. They coalesce in the late seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries into a creed, almost an ideology. The great paradox of liberalism is that the system of bourgeois liberalism which developed in this period had to be turned inside out and upside down in

our own time to defend its own bedrock principle of human freedom.

It is this development that is dealt with in the next two chapters.

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# CHAPTER V

## BOURGEOIS LIBERALISM

The term "bourgeois liberalism" is not universally applied to the interlocking system of economic, political, and psychological theories that precipitated out of the mix of ideas outlined in the last chapter. Laski, for example, chose to call it, simply, "liberalism:"

> In the period between the Reformation and the French Revolution a new social class established its title to a full share in the control of the state. In its ascent to power, it broke down the barriers which, in all spheres of life save the ecclesiastical, had made privilege a function of status, and associated the idea of rights with the tenure of land. To achieve its end, it effected a fundamental change in the legal relationships of men. . . . New material conditions, in short, gave birth to new social relationships; and in terms of these, a new philosophy was evolved to afford a rational justification for the new world which had come into being.
>
> This new philosophy was liberalism;. . .[1]

Cumming, in his very lengthy and very thorough study entitled Human Nature and History: A Study of the Development of Liberal Political Thought,[2] also used the unembroidered term "liberalism," although--as the subtitle implies--he attempted to break it down into its psychological and historical components.

Girvetz takes still a different view in From Wealth to Welfare: The Evolution of Liberalism.[3] He emphasizes the association between political liberalism and the economic theories of Smith, Ricardo, and Malthus--theories which are generally lumped together under the heading "classical economics"--and comes up with the term "classical liberalism."

In Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State,[4] Sidney Fine emphasized the negative aspect of nineteenth century liberalism and used the term "laissez faire" as a catch-all for the dominant economic and political attitudes in the United States between 1865 and 1901.

All of these men are writing about essentially the same thing, although they use different terminology. It would seem that since the web of economic, political, and psychological theories which is being described here is intimately connected to so many aspects of bourgeois culture--i.e., it is not wholly an economic theory--the term "bourgeois liberalism" is the most descriptive. Accordingly, we have chosen to use this term to describe the cluster of ideas concerning man in his economic and political roles that is dominant in the western world during the period between--roughly--the end of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the twentieth; the term "welfare liberalism" we reserve for theories regarding similar topics in our own time.

The basis of bourgeois liberalism is a particular view of man, or human nature, or what Girvetz calls a "psychological creed."[5] The point of departure for this psychological creed is the idea of human atomism. Men are viewed as discrete, atomic individuals, whether they are going about their mundane affairs in the marketplace or involved in the more serious business of salvation of their souls. Regardless of what activity they are involved in, men cannot lose their essential uniqueness. In Mill's words:

> Men...in a state of society, are still men; their actions and passions are obedient to the law of individual human nature. Men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance with different properties, as oxygen and hydrogen are different from water.... Human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from, and may be resolved into, the laws of individual men.[6]

The idea of the immutable, atomistic nature of the human personality was of course not original with Mill. It is central to the Protestant idea of individual salvation, and becomes a pervasive notion in the psychological theories of Hume, Hartley, and Berkeley. As Girvetz points out:

> It is characteristic of the great majority of English and French thinkers of this time that, in all their numerous inquiries into human nature, they went back to simple atomic sense impressions, out of which they sought to reconstruct the entire content of mental and emotional life. For the most part they shared with Hartley the judgment that "it is of the utmost consequence...that the affections and passions should be analyzed into their simple compounding parts, by reversing the steps of the associations which concur to form them."[7]

The emphasis upon "the primacy of the atomic individual"[8] led to other important ideas concerning human nature. To many thinkers during the period of bourgeois liberalism, it was assumed a priori that individual men are totally egoistic, totally selfish. The famous "selfish system" of Hobbes is perhaps the best-known formulation of this idea. Hobbes, as is well known, was concerned with very practical matters. He lived in an era filled with turmoil and terror, and he took it as his duty to find a way of government that could maintain some semblance of order. According to Minar, Hobbes:

> ...held that men's actions stemmed from a pervading fear of death from which may be inferred a train of less compelling but still influential pleasures and pains. In their fear of death, men seek the power to prevent it, and in doing so they come into conflict with others trying to maximize their own powers. A fundamental equality in the state of nature makes it impossible for anyone to impose his will on the rest. Therefore, man naturally faces a predicament--a predicament in which he and his fellows are compelled to seek power, but at the expense of one another, a situation in which everyone must suffer.[9]

It was these selfish conflicts in the state of nature which led Hobbes to assert his fundamental axiom that in the state of nature the lives of selfish men are necessarily "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[10] Hobbes' solution to the problem of "war of every man against every man"[11] turned out to be an elaborate defense of authoritarian government--or at least of a very strong monarchy. This solution was not logically dictated by the internal evidence of Leviathan. Any government which could maintain peace would have sufficed, but Hobbes, reacting to the immense political upheavals of seventeenth century England, quite understandably opted for a strong monarchy. The great paradox in Hobbesian thought is that it contributed in such large measure to the enhancement of human freedom, and that was not at all what Hobbes intended.

The Hobbesian solution to the problem of maintaining peace was for men to surrender some component of their freedom to a government, or commonwealth. In his own words:

> I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner.[12]

For our purposes, the important thing to note about Hobbes' theory of the commonwealth is that it did not deny the fundamental selfishness of man. It affirmed it, but sought to make a compromise with it:

> The difference between man in a state of nature and civilized man is not the difference between brute selfishness and altruistic consideration for the welfare of others; it is the difference between the reckless egoist who yields to his immediate impulses and the cool, calculating egoist who perceives that he must reckon with the welfare of others if his own well-being is to be secured.[13]

The idea of man as a totally selfish creature neither began nor ended with Thomas Hobbes. Glaucon and Thasymachus in Plato's Republic argued eloquently in a Hobbesian vein. And long after Hobbes' death, Jeremy Bentham built a whole theory of man and government around the idea that man seeks his own selfish pleasure above all else:

> Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other, the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we think....[14]

Bentham went on from this assumption to build the "hedonistic calculus" by which men attempt to maximize pleasure and minimize pain through the exercise of reason. This brings us to a third assumption concerning human nature in bourgeois liberalism: not only is man a selfish atom; he is also a thinking, rational creature capable of working out for himself the best means of attaining his selfish ends.

Only a rational creature could overcome his passions and surrender some of his freedom to a monarch, in the Hobbesian sense. Only a thinking man, in Bentham's terms, could work out a balance of pleasure and pain. Whatever else Bentham was--and likewise his colleagues James Mill and John Stuart Mill--he was the apotheosis of rationalism. Although he was a reformer of considerable note, Bentham's reforms sprang from his firm belief in the rational basis of human life. There was absolutely nothing of a sentimental nature about him. He was driven by logic, not by altruism:

> Bentham's fame rests in large part upon his remarkable activities in behalf of legal reform. Interest here is not in his concrete proposals, excellent as many of these were, but in the characteristic logic by which he arrived at them. Criminals, Bentham argued in his well-known discussion of penology, must be treated with a view to discouraging further crime and reforming the criminal. He rejects the idea that the criminal must make retribution through suffering, since this of itself merely adds to the quantity of pain in the world. Pain must be inflicted upon the criminal but only in sufficient measure to barely exceed the pleasure which he derived from his crime. More pain that this would embitter him and turn him against society; less would encourage him to further crime.
>
> Here in application are all the assumptions of the hedonistic calculus: that pleasures and pains can be measured and nicely balanced against each other; that felons, not to mention honest men, will engage in the kind of calculation which Bentham describes.[15]

It is this centrality of reason in bourgeois liberalism that led Carlyle to use terms like "wire-drawn", "colorless", "aqueous", and "other synonyms for weak"[16] to describe John Stuart Mill, who inherited so much of the Benthamite philosophy. The emphasis on reason as the

controlling factor in human life is one of the fundamental splits between bourgeois and welfare liberalism.

The final element in the view of human nature posited by the bourgeois liberals is what Girvetz calls "psychological quietism."[17] It is closely related to the idea of stimulus-response in modern psychology. It is also connected to the more basic ideas of man as atomistic, selfish, and rational. Accordinging to this idea, there must be some inducement for a man to act. He does not find satisfaction in performing an act itself; his gratification lies somewhere in a misty abstraction beyond merely painting a picture or accumulating wealth, viz., in pleasure. To take any action involves some expenditure of effort, and is thus painful; man is naturally indolent; he will not accept the pain of doing work unless he can see--rationally--a greater pleasure beyond the act itself. As Bentham said,

> Aversion--not desire--is the emotion--the only emotion--which labour, taken by itself, is qualified to produce: of any such emotion as love, or desire, ease, which is the negative or absence of labour--ease, not labour--is the object.[18]

Needless to say, the idea that in the absence of stimulus, men will not work is still very much with us. We continue to hear, daily, such sayings as "Necessity is the mother of invention," and the debate over the dire consequences of welfare spending is one of the key issues of our time, although rarely are the fundamental assumptions which lie behind such debates made explicit.

To summarize: the bourgeois liberals developed a theory of human nature which rested upon the assumptions that men are atoms; that men are selfish; that men are rational; that men must be motivated out of their lethargy. This view of human nature led, in turn, to other theories regarding economics and government.

It is extremely difficult to separate economics from politics. Somehow, there is always a connection between government, on the one hand, and the production and distribution of goods and services on the other. At one time, this connection manifests itself in the legislative enactment of a protective tariff; at another point in history, government encourages the penetration of railroads into remote regions of the nation by paying direct subsidies to the lines, as well as by granting them huge tracts of land along their rights-of-way. In our time, we have witnessed government indirectly subsidizing the automobile industry by financing the construction of a nation-wide system of highways, and directly subsidizing the airlines by underwriting both airport construction and the R & D costs of new aircraft. Despite the obvious difficulties involved in dividing human activity into its economic and political components, however, that is precisely what is done in the following discussion. It should be borne in mind that this division is, perforce, an inaccurate one; it does not really show the dynamic situation involved in the political-economic connection. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to disregard the dynamics of a situation and concentrate instead upon its static

characteristics; to hold things still, as it were, in order to see what it is we are talking about.

Bourgeois liberalism grew up during a period when the dominant economic mode in the western world was classified as capitalistic, i.e., it was based upon the notion that the means of production of all goods and most services should properly remain in the hands of private individuals. This is certainly not the place to go into a lengthy discussion of the history of capitalism. However, it should be stressed that many of the ideas which form the capitalistic creed belong equally to the temper of bourgeois liberalism. In fact, if we concentrate attention upon economics alone, it is virtually impossible to tell the difference between bourgeois liberalism and capitalism. It might be said that bourgeois liberalism was the <u>theory</u> and capitalism was the <u>practice</u> of economic freedom, but this is probably a distinction that is too vague to be of much use. In a special edition of <u>The Rise of European Liberalism</u> for the United States market, Laski specifically identified liberalism as the "Philosophy of a Business Civilization."[19] It seems unnecessary to belabor the point that liberalism and capitalism have a very large number of congruent points, although liberalism is a somewhat broader concept. It is perhaps not quite so easy to see that neither one necessarily implies the other. For a long time, it was thought that capitalism was <u>the</u> way to free the individual human being in his economic activities. Today, it is recognized by many that capitalism generates economic tyrannies of its own. Thus

welfare liberalism has, in large measure, reversed the older view of economics held by the bourgeois liberals.

The capitalistic creed which reached full bloom in the western world--and particularly in America--during the closing years of the nineteenth century was built upon three assumptions which it shares with bourgeois liberalism: 1) the "natural right" of individuals to private property; 2) the efficacy of "free market" economics; 3) the inevitability of "progress."

The bedrock principle of capitalism is a belief in the individual right to private property. This idea has a history that is probably as old as man himself. Virtually no society is known that does not have some concept of private property. Even the most thorough-going socialist system reserves something for private ownership, if only small personal articles. Conversely, those societies which boast of being capitalistic never follow through completely with the idea of private ownership. Always there is something publicly owned--the highways, for example, or the mail system and other mechanisms to facilitate exchange.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the age-old system of property ownership based upon feudal rights was breaking down everywhere in the western world. As Laski pointed out in the work cited earlier, a new class--the bourgeoisie--was everywhere asserting itself against the traditional claims of feudal aristocracy.[20] In England, as well as in France, new "families" were beginning to

demand certain political rights commensurate with their newly-found wealth. Conditions were not eased, either, by the spread of Protestantism and the wars of religion that followed in its wake. As Max Weber made so abundantly clear, Protestantism and Capitalism are irrevocably linked.[21] Land was no longer the only source of wealth, as the sacraments of the Church were no longer the only way to salvation. In America, as Louis Hartz stressed in The Liberal Tradition in America,[22] there was no feudal system--or at least not a solidly entrenched one--to react against. America has always been "liberal" in the sense that old world traditions have not held absolute dominion. This is the same idea stressed by de Tocqueville years before:

> The great advantage of the Americans is that they have arrived at a state of democracy without having to endure a democratic revolution; and that they are born equal, instead of becoming so.[23]

Nevertheless, there are distinct similarities between American ideas of private property and European "Whiggery."

John Locke provided what is probably the best defense of private property in the Anglo-American tradition. Locke, as the "official" apologist for the Glorious Revolution, followed Hobbes in using the metaphor of the state of nature as a starting point for his analysis of the contemporary economic and political situation. Locke agreed with Hobbes that the state of nature "however free is full of fears and continual dangers."[24] In the Second Treatise, Locke suggested that the cause of strife in the state of nature is confusion over "the control and use of property."[25] Locke adhered to a kind of jusnaturalism[26] which,

in fact, is more of a metaphysical than a purely political concept. Perhaps the whole tradition of jusnaturalism should be viewed as "metapolitical" since it springs from a region beyond the experiential. At any rate, Locke argued that men have a "natural right" to their property--by which he meant life, liberty, and estate,[27] not just physical possessions in the contemporary sense of the word "property." Estate, in turn, resulted from "mixing one's labor" with the things of the natural world. Since "mixing one's labor" is tantamount to adding a part of one's life to the soil, it follows that "property rights"--i.e., "property rights" in the modern sense, "rights to estate" in Locke's terminology--have an ethical rather than merely a legal basis.[28] Their source is natural law, which, in the jusnaturalism tradition, lies beyond the reach of any government. Such an idea was enormously important for the rising bourgeoisie of Locke's time--and of ours--for it gave a profound sense of legitimacy to the accumulation of earthly goods, an act which, in the older, feudal society, had been looked upon as somehow immoral. It should be noted that neither in Britain nor in the United States was the idea of accumulating possessions immediately accepted by all people. For a very long time, a kind of snobishness prevailed in England which viewed "trade" as somehow inferior to "landed" wealth. As late as the first decades of the nineteenth century, Jane Austen was able to show--perhaps more clearly than any other writer in English--the extreme antipathies that existed between "old" and "new" money. And it was not until very

late in the nineteenth century that John D. Rockefeller could safely proclaim in all seriousness and all piety, "The good Lord gave me my money!"[29] But by this time, the Gospel of Success--and its slightly ameliorating counterpart, the Gospel of Wealth--had come to grip the nation in fingers of steel. Social Darwinism seemed to offer the final modicum of proof regarding the morality of private ownership of property.

When Locke wrote the Second Treatise, all this lay far in the future. The important thing to be noted here is that from the end of the seventeenth century, the doctrine of man's natural, inherent, and moral right to private property was afoot in the world. Through the years, this bedrock principle of capitalism attracted a whole galaxy of able defenders.

By the time Adam Smith published The Wealth of Nations (in the same year the Declaration of Independence was written), Locke's defense of the right to private property had been accepted by a very large part of the populations of both England and the United States. Smith saw no need to defend it on a metaphysical basis, at least not as emphatically as Locke had. Nevertheless, Smith's economic theories greatly strengthened the capitalistic creed.

In many respects, Smith followed the economic thinking of the Physiocrats, particularly that of Quesnay. The Physiocrats asserted that there were natural laws functioning in the economic realm, exactly as there were in the physical realm. In the Age of Reason, writer

after writer viewed the world's complexities in what are--from our point of view--excessively simple, mechanistic terms. It seems that the grand passion of the eighteenth century philosophers was to reduce all phenomena to something as easily understood as F = Ma, which, they thought, Newton had done in physics for all time. For a while, it seemed there must be "laws" which, although they might remain in part mysterious, could at least be comprehended in large measure by exercising rational reflection. As Pope wrote:

> All Nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see.
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good;
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear: whatever is, is RIGHT.[30]

The Physiocrats held that to tamper with the "natural laws" of economics would be as disastrous as attempting to tamper with the "laws" of the physical world. It simply could not be done without opening a Pandora's box of turmoil.

They were agrarians; they held that the only true source of wealth is agriculture; only agriculture can produce a surplus; only a surplus can produce wealth. The Physiocrats further believed that agricultural surpluses would be forthcoming only if men were left free and unencumbered to produce. The term "laissez faire" was coined by a Physiocrat. "Laissez faire," which became a byword for the bourgeois liberals of the nineteenth century, simply meant that government should keep "hands off" man's economic activities in order to give free rein to the functioning of the "natural laws" of economics.[31]

Adam Smith absorbed much of the Physiocrats' thinking, although he rejected the notion that only agriculture produces wealth. Smith held that commerce and industry as well as agriculture are a nation's wealth producers. He maintained that the productivity of a nation could be improved only by abandoning the old mercantilist policies and allowing a "free market" to function. Smith began his argument by pointing to the great advantages of the division of labor:

> The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is anywhere directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour.[32]

The division of labor, however, can come about only if "exchange" is present"

> This division of labour, from which so many advantages are derived, is not originally the effect of any human wisdom, which forsees and intends that general opulence to which it gives occasion. It is the necessary, though very slow and gradual consequence of a certain propensity in human nature which has in view no such extensive utility; the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another. ...the certainty of being able to exchange all that surplus part of the produce of his own labour, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he may have occasion for, encourages every man to apply himself to a particular occupation, and to cultivate and to bring to perfection whatever talent or genius he may possess for that particular species of business.[33]

This happy process of individuals pursuing their selfish ends by following their "natural propensities" to "truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another" has a salutary outcome for society in general. Not only does the individual satisfy his wants thereby but the lot of the whole society is improved:

> He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it...by directing...industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote and end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it.[34]

Smith truly believed that a "natural harmony of interests" would result if only men were left free to pursue their own economic self-interest:

> Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order of men. The sovereign is completely discharged from a duty, in the attempting to perform which he must always be exposed to innumerable delusions, and for the proper performance of which no human wisdom or knowledge could ever be sufficient; the duty of superintending the industry of private people, and of directing it toward the employments most suitable to the interest of the society. According to the system of natural liberty, the sovereign has only three duties to attend to; three duties of great importance, indeed, but plain and intelligible to common understandings: first, the duty of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member of the society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice; and thirdly, the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions, which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain; because the profit could never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals, though it may frequently do much more than repay it to a great society.[35]

Here it is impossible to resist noting how easily a theory of economics slides over into a theory of government. Adam Smith's laissez faire economics demanded that he establish the negative view of government outlined in the above quotation. The main thrust of bourgeois liberalism was to establish a government that was essentially negative. Much of this negative view of government resulted from the theory of economics advanced by Smith and his followers.

To Smith's ideas concerning free market economics, Thomas Malthus added another important idea in his Essay on Population.[36] Malthus asserted that the production of food increases at an arithmetic rate (1, 2, 3, 4...n) while the population increases at a geometric rate (2, 4, 8, 16...n). Consequently, the great mass of men are doomed to live forever on the brink of starvation; poverty is a necessary outgrowth of natural law.[37]

David Ricardo placed the capstone on the edifice of classical economics by advancing the iron law of wages in Principles of Political Economy and Taxation[38] which was published in 1817. According to Ricardo, a laborer's wages can never exceed a "natural price" which, in turn, is a "subsistence wage," or just enough for a worker to support himself and his family. Any increase beyond mere subsistence would have to come either at the expense of other workers, or out of profits. Both of these courses are evil, for to take away a part of another worker's pay would throw him below the level of subsistence; to demand more than an employer had in his "wages fund" would reduce

profits, and thus reduce the amount of capital available for investment. This, in turn, would mean a lowering of productivity, unemployment, and all sorts of social grief.

The outcome of Ricardo's theory was the idea that any increase in wages beyond subsistence would wreak havoc upon the whole economic system.[39] It is no wonder that economics earned the name the "dismal science" during these early years. The natural extension of the ideas of Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo--and legions of their followers in both England and the United States--was the firm belief that any attempt to ameliorate the suffering of the masses will simply result in more leisure. More leisure will result in more babies, and more babies will result in increased human suffering as food supplies run further and further behind demand and the pressure to reduce wages continues to build. This is a very gloomy prospect indeed, but it was one accepted by virtually all bourgeois liberals.

One idea needs to be added to complete the picture of bourgeois liberalism. Charles Darwin was familiar with Malthus' idea of inevitable overpopulation. In fact, this theory exercised a very strong influence on Darwin in the development of his own concept of competition for survival among all species of creatures.[40] Darwin himself did not apply his ideas to human society, but other thinkers--notably Walter Bagehot and Herbert Spencer in England and William Graham Sumner in the United States--were quick to seize upon the idea of survival of the fittest as the final buttressing member of

free-market capitalism. According to these various "Social Darwinists," the key to understanding human life lies in the notion of survival of the fittest. On this view, the system of free economic competition was nothing more than another instance of the struggle for survival which Darwin had "proved" to be universal and "natural." If one succeeded in competitive enterprise, this merely showed that one was "fit" to survive in the human jungle. If one failed, this too was evidence of the working of natural laws. To rail against the competitive system as unfair was nothing less than railing against nature itself. Evolution was the key word in these latter years of the nineteenth century, and evolution could only proceed by throwing off those unable to stand the gaff. Somehow, the idea of evolution was transformed into the idea of social progress. It became an article of faith in the writings of the Social Darwinists that the progress of human society was inevitable, <u>if</u> men were left free to work out their own selfish ends. As Spencer put it:

> Pervading all nature we may see at work a stern discipline, which is a little cruel that it may be very kind. That state of universal warfare maintained throughout the lower creation, to the perplexity of many worthy people, is at bottom the most merciful provision which the circumstances admit of.... The poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the imprudent, the starvation of the idle, and those shoulderings aside of the weak by the strong, which leave so many "in shallows and in miseries," are the decrees of a large, far-seeing benevolence. It seems hard that an unskillfulness which with all its efforts he cannot overcome, should entail hunger upon the artisan. It seems hard that a labourer incapacitated by sickness from competing with his stronger fellows, should have to bear the resulting privations. It seems hard that widows and orphans should be left to struggle for

> life or death. Nevertheless, when regarded not separately, but in connection with the interests of universal humanity, these harsh fatalities are seen to be full of the highest beneficence--the same beneficence which brings to early graves the children of diseased parents, and singles out the low-spirited, the intemperate, and the debilitated as the victims of an epidemic....[41]

This does indeed seem "hard" but it was the final step in the growth of the economics of bourgeois liberalism, and the capitalistic system which it defended. The weak must continue to bear their suffering in order to allow the strong to go on about the business of inevitable social evolution.

In summary, there are three root assumptions in the economics of bourgeois liberalism: 1) man has a natural right to private property; 2) private property can exist only in a free market economy; 3) social progress is inevitable if men are allowed to compete freely with each other. Inevitably, these ideas of benign economic anarchy--anarchy plus the constable--led the bourgeois liberals to a theory of government which is intimately related to their theories of economics and evolution. The outstanding view of government advanced by the bourgeois liberals, as already suggested, was the belief that government, properly construed, is a negative, not a positive, force in men's lives.

If men are viewed as individual, selfish atoms, and if it is assumed that social stability can be maintained only by allowing men to pursue their own economic ends in as unbridled a fashion as possible, then it follows that government should be a force which does nothing more than provide sufficient protection to allow "exchange" to

function. Government is, on this view, man's enemy, and the less of it there is, the better.

In England, bourgeois liberalism received its greatest defense from John Stuart Mill. In On Liberty, Mill wrote:

> ...the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him, or persuading him or entreating him, but not for compelling him, or visiting him with any evil, in case he do otherwise. To justify that, the conduct from which it is desired to deter him must be calculated to produce evil to someone else. The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.[42]

This, of course, is among the strongest--perhaps the strongest--statements ever penned in defense of laissez faire theories of government and economics. In Mill's view, it is a logical deduction from the greatest happiness principle. Although there are a number of logical difficulties involved in Mill's assertion of laissez faire as the embodiment of the greatest happiness principle, they need not concern us at this point.[43] The important idea to be noted here is that this negative concept of government became dominant in nineteenth century England, and no less so in the United States.

Writing in 1888, Lord Bryce said of the American theory of government that laissez faire is "...the orthodox and accepted doctrine in the sphere both of Federal and of State legislatures."[44] In America, the doctrine of laissez faire has a very long history.

In the first place, it must be noted that those who came to America--from the very beginning--were unhappy people. Happy people do not risk an extremely hazardous sea-crossing and a precarious existence on the edge of a vast, hostile wilderness. Happy people stay home. As the various histories of immigration show, different groups came for quite different reasons, but the one thing they all had in common was an immensely strong desire to remove some sort of fetters from their lives. They did not come to establish a "free" society in an abstract sense. It is a historical commonplace to assert that almost all of the early settlers along the Atlantic seacoast were very quick to deny "freedom" to those who came along a little bit later and attempted to live differently from those already established. The cases of Thomas Morton, Roger Williams, Anne Hutchinson, and perhaps even Nathaniel Bacon might be cited in this regard. Seventeenth century history is filled with such examples.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that these events did take place, that from the very beginning, there were individuals in America who resisted the prevailing mode of government, clearly indicates that the idea of non-interference by government in men's private affairs took root in American soil at the very outset of settlement. Many of

the apparent contradictions in American political life can be reconciled if it is kept in mind that distrust of government--a central issue in the temper of bourgeois liberalism--is endemic to the society.

At the time of the American Revolution, Tom Paine very clearly caught the spirit of native distrust of government:

> Some writers have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher.
>
> Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one: for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries by a Government, which we might expect in a country without government, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built upon the ruins of the bowers of paradise.[45]

As virtually every commentator on the Revolutionary War period has pointed out, Paine did not develop a whole new theory of government in Common Sense, any more than Jefferson did in the Declaration of Independence. Instead, Paine simply put down in direct and coherent language the basic ideas of liberty and distrust of government that seemed naturally to flourish on American soil. Samuel Eliot Morison once described an interview that took place in 1842 between Judge Mellen Chamberlain (then a lad of twenty-one) and one Captain Preston, a ninety-one-year-old veteran of the Battle of Concord:

> "Did you take up arms against intolerable oppressions?" he [Chamberlain] asked.
> "Oppressions?" replied the old man. "I didn't feel them."
> "What, were you not oppressed by the Stamp Act?"
> "I never saw one of those stamps. I certainly never paid a penny for one of them."
> "Well, what then about the tea tax?"
> "I never drank a drop of the stuff; the boys threw it all overboard."
> "Then I suppose you had been reading Harington or Sidney and Locke about the eternal principles of liberty?"
> "Never heard of 'em. We read only the Bible, the Catechism, Watts' Psalms and Hymns, and the Almanac."
> "Well, then, what was the matter? And what did you mean in going to the fight?"
> "Young man, what we meant in going for those redcoats was this: we always had governed ourselves, and we always meant to. They didn't mean we should."[46]

This exchange pretty well sums up the native American distrust of government as something remote from those who are governed. It is one of the key ideas in American political history. Certainly it is central to the conception of government held by the bourgeois liberals.

When the fifty-five delegates to the Constitutional Convention met at Philadelphia in the summer of 1787, they had to wrestle with the enormously complex problems of how to build an effective government. Very early, it became abundantly clear that no system would ever be accepted by the various states if it could possibly result in a unified force exercising complete control over men's private lives. The various debates and compromises resulted in a document that has stood up remarkably well in the fullness of time. The delegates relied very heavily upon Montesquieu's idea of separation of powers as the best guarantee against tyranny. Implicit in Montesquieu's Spirit of the Laws and in the Federal Constitution is a fundamental distrust of

government. Governments are made of men, and men are corrupt, selfish atoms who always pursue their own egoistic ends. Accordingly, any system of government which confers unlimited power upon a prince, a social class, or even a legislative body contains within it the seeds of tyranny. The Federalist Papers, although written to convince the people of the State of New York that a central government much stronger than that established under the Articles of Confederation was in their best interests, still held to the idea that governmental power should not exceed that necessary to assure some degree of stability, or, in the language of the Preamble, "domestic tranquility." The various essays by Hamilton, Madison, and Jay stressed again and again the ideas of federalism and checks and balances. There is, to be sure, a certain "distrust of democracy,"[47] and such revolutionary firebrands as Patrick Henry found it impossible to reconcile the proposed Constitution with the older ideas behind the Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, even The Federalist Papers reflect a certain distrust of government. As Madison wrote in "Federalist No. XXXIX:"

> If we resort for a criterion to the different principles on which different forms of government are established, we may define a republic to be, or at least may bestow that name on, a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure, for a limited period, or during good behavior. It is essential to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion, or a favored class of it; otherwise a handful of tyrannical nobles, exercising their oppressions by a delegation of their powers,

> might aspire to the rank of republicans and claim for their government the honorable title of republic. It is sufficient for such a government that the persons administering it be appointed, either directly or indirectly, by the people; and that they hold their appointments by either of the tenures just specified; otherwise every government of the United States, as well as every other popular government that has been or can be well organized or well executed, would be degraded from the republican character.[48]

Clearly, there is a distrust of government--at least of an elitist government, removed from the people--in these words, a distruct that is not at all inimical to the spirit of the Revolution. The "gentlemen's agreements"[49] which resulted in the adoption of the Bill of Rights as a condition for ratification are another instance of the fundamental distrust of government that seems so basic to American life.

It is traditional to view the early years of the Republic as years of struggle between two oppossed parties, the Federalists and the Antifederalists. According to this view, the Federalist Party sought a greater role for the national government in men's private affairs, while the Antifederalists remained somehow "truer" to the de-centralist principles of the Revolution. The Federalists, under the nominal head of John Adams, are supposed to have desired to see governmental power exercised by the wealthy, i.e., by those with a "stake in society." The Antifederalists, who looked to Jefferson as their leader, tended to be more "democratic," more de-centralist, planting government on a broader base of "free, yeoman farmers," instead of a class of wealthy merchants. There is a certain amount

of truth in this view. It was, after all, a Federalist Congress that passed the Naturalization Act on June 18, 1798, the Alien Act on June 25, the Alien Enemies Act on July 6, and the Sedition Act on July 14. And it was a Federalist President who signed them all into law.[50] It was also a Federalist Chief Justice who, some years later, established the supremacy of the national government in Marbury v. Madison and McCulloch v. Maryland. Certainly these incidents, along with Adams' many essays on government and Hamilton's Reports lend a great deal of credence to the view that the Federalist Party was intent on establishing a very strong, central government that was essentially undemocratic.

It is also true that the Antifederalists took quite a different view of many things. As Jefferson said in his First Inauguaral Address:

> ...a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government, and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities.[51]

These words could have been uttered by Adam Smith--or by John Stuart Mill. Clearly, Jefferson and the Antifederalists profoundly distrusted government. They were very strongly infected with the temper of bourgeois liberalism. It is not usually so clearly understood, however, that the Federalists, although they represented a different class than the free yeoman farmers Jefferson was wont to

dream about, also had a profound distrust of government. They did not forsee a monolithic state of some sort. Hamilton, for example, was probably the most extreme of the Federalists. He saw more clearly than many of his contemporaries the larger role government would have to play in the future of the nation. But even Hamilton argued for government support of manufacturing in terms of individual freedom. He supported such measures as tariffs, inspections, pecuniary bounties, prohibition of certain imports, and so on, in opposition to the prevailing arguments out of Physiocratic thinking and the writings of Adam Smith. Nevertheless, Hamilton did not argue for a monolithic state that would place people where they could best serve an abstract public good, regardless of their own inclinations. On the contrary, one of the major themes of the Report on Manufactures is that increased government involvement in encouraging manufacturing would enhance individual freedom by "furnishing greater scope for the diversity of talents and dispositions which discriminate men from each other."[52] This idea is obviously not very far removed from Adam Smith's idea of the division of labor. And in his opinion on the Constitutionality of the Bank, Hamilton emphatically declared, "...no government has a right to do merely what it pleases."[53] He went on, of course, to assert that government has a duty to do those things which are necessary for the survival of the state, and in so doing perhaps stretched the necessary and proper clause of the Constitution farther than was acceptable to some people. The point is, however,

that even in Hamilton's writings there are very powerful restraints placed upon government, and hence it is quite fair to state that, for all their differences, the Federalists and Antifederalists both displayed a certain distrust of government. Certainly the Federalists foresaw a more creative role for the national government than the Antifederalists did and, if Charles Beard is to be believed, not always for the most noble of reasons. But neither party entertained any idea of government as the principle source of individual human welfare. That idea had to wait until near the end of the nineteenth century.

The election of Andrew Jackson in 1828 released forces in the United States which have provided fertile soil for historians ever since. Was Jacksonianism a resurgence of Jefferson's agrarian democracy? It sometimes seems so, although the prevailing tide of historical opinion holds otherwise. Jackson's war against Mr. Biddle's bank is usually cited to support the idea that Jacksonianism was a revolt of the common man against the entrenched forces of eastern wealth. Jackson's supporters were supposedly free, western farmers who imbibed a spirit of egalitarianism at birth on the free frontier.[54] They despised wealth, aristocracy, and power--all of which seemed to be represented in neo-Federalism. Paradoxically, however, the Jacksonians also supported increasing the executive power of both Old Hickory and their state governors, even while they sought to extend the franchise and deny certain perquisites to the wealthy men of the East.[55] And as Schlesinger has pointed out,

Jackson was supported by eastern workingmen as much as he was by western farmers.[56] Where did this nascent proletariat imbibe its spirit of egalitarianism?

The true significance of Jacksonianism in relation to the growth of the liberal temper was that it brought the bourgeois ideas of private property ownership and capitalistic enterprise down to the masses of the nation. The war against the Bank of the United States in Jackson's second term, the various reforms advocated by Jackson men, the very great broadening of the franchise in the 1830's, and the ready availability of land--whether for farming or speculation--went together to make laissez faire a popular idea in the United States, something that never happened in Europe.[57]

By 1859, Abraham Lincoln had become a national figure, and was asked to speak all over the country. One of the themes common to many of his speeches was a theory of labor and capital that is, in essence, a pure expression of bourgeois liberalism. To the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society at Milwaukee, Lincoln said:

> The prudent, penniless beginner in the world, labors for wages for awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This, say its advocates, is free labor--the just and generous, and prosperous system, which opens the way for all--gives hope to all, and energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all. If any continue through life in the condition of the hired laborer, it is not the fault of the system, but because of either a dependent nature which prefers it, or improvidence, folly, or singular misfortune.[58]

This simplistic view of capitalism was central to Lincoln's thinking, and it pretty well sums up the prevailing attitude toward bourgeois liberalism which dominated American thought until the last decades of the nineteenth century. There were dissenters from this view, of course, particularly in the South. But the ideas of Calhoun, Hinton Helper, George Fitzhugh, et al., did not prevail. The ideas of Lincoln did. After the Civil War, the aggressive men of the Gilded Age found a rich nation fully prepared for economic exploitation of the most extreme sort. The Goulds, Harrimans, Vanderbilts, Astors, and Rockefellers--all men from undistinguished backgrounds--could not have built up their mind-boggling fortunes had there not been an acquiescent population almost totally dedicated to the basic ideas of bourgeois liberalism. The temper of bourgeois liberalism provided the best possible safeguards for individual freedom. The individual was protected from himself--from his natural propensity to sloth--by living always on the brink of economic disaster; he was protected from violence at the hands of fellow citizens by a negative government which could, somehow, referee without "interfering" in the natural processes of the market place. Finally, government itself, by an elaborate system of checks and balances was prohibited from doing harm to the individual.[59] During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the combined forces of businessmen, academics, clergymen, lawyers, judges, and legions of "popularizers" made bourgeois liberalism the prevailing philosophy of the nation.[60] There

were dissenting voices, of course, but it was not until well into the twentieth century that the critics of bourgeois liberalism became dominant. With a rich continent before him, and the temper of bourgeois liberalism as his fundamental philosophy, the individual was left free to "hustle" and achieve whatever success his natural abilities could bring.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Harold J. Laski, The Rise of European Liberalism (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1936), pp. 11-12.

2. Robert Denoon Cumming, Human Nature and History: A Study of the Development of Liberal Political Thought (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), passim.

3. Harry K. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare: The Evolution of Liberalism (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1950), passim.

4. Sidney Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State: A Study of Conflict in American Thought, 1865-1901 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1964), passim.

5. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare, Ch. I. In my discussion of bourgeois liberalism I have relied very heavily upon Girvetz's analysis of classical liberalism. It seems to me that--with certain reservations and qualifications--Part I of his book is a most adequate analysis of this topic. Part II, however, presents a considerable problem. Girvetz entitled this part "Contemporary Liberalism." In large measure, it is an advocacy of Keynesian economics and a defense of post-1937 welfare legislation, i.e., the programs of the New Deal and the Fair Deal. We cannot fault Girvetz, of course, for failing to predict in 1950 that many of these bright and hopeful programs would create horrid problems of their own. Who could have predicted twenty years ago that urban renewal, highway building, and land reclamation would lead to ecological disaster? There are two paradoxes to be noted here. In the first place, it seems that the further back in time a writer goes, the more accurate his analysis is--even though he is unable to obtain complete data concerning remote events. In the second place, it now seems that many of the early programs in the period of welfare liberalism, although they were intended to ameliorate the suffering of men, are actually resulting in greater suffering--over the long haul--than anything the world has yet witnessed.

6. John Stuart Mill, A System of Logic (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1941), Book VI; Ch. vii.

7. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare, p. 22.

8. Ibid., 25.

9. David W. Minar, Ideas and Politics: The American Experience (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1964), p. 44.

10. Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil, ed. by A. R. Waller (London: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p. 84.

11. Ibid., 83.

12. Ibid., 118.

13. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare, p. 9.

14. Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, in The Works of Jeremy Bentham, ed. J. Bowring (Edinburgh: W. Tait, 1838-43), I, i.

15. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare, p. 16.

16. Michael St. John Packe, The Life of John Stuart Mill (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), p. 182.

17. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare, pp. 16-21.

18. Ibid., 18.

19. Cumming, Human Nature and History, p. 2.

20. Laski, The Rise of European Liberalism, passim.

21. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. by Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), passim.

22. Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955), passim.

23. Ibid., title page.

24. John Locke, "Civil Government" (Second Treatise) in E. A. Burtt, ed., The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill (New York: Modern Library, 1939), pp. 453-54.

25. Minar, Ideas and Politics, p. 48.

26. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare, pp. 86-92.

27. Minar, Ideas and Politics, p. 48.

28. Obviously, the whole concept of jusnaturalism is based in metaphysics, if not in downright mysticism. Morris Cohen commented on this tradition in a number of essays. See, for example, Morris R. Cohen, "Constitutional and Natural Rights in 1789 and Since," National Lawyers Guild Quarterly, 1 (1938), pp. 92-103.

29. Ralph Henry Gabriel, The Course of American Democratic Thought: An Intellectual History Since 1815 (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1940), p. 149.

30. Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Man," The Norton Anthology of Poetry, ed. Arthur M. Eastman, et al., (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 452-453, lines 289-294.

31. J. Salwyn Schapiro, Liberalism: Its Meaning and History (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1958), p. 27. See also Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State, Part One.

32. Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1937), p. 3.

33. Ibid., 13-15.

34. Ibid., 423.

35. Ibid., 651.

36. Thomas Robert Malthus, An Essay on Population (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1914).

37. Theodore J. Lowi, The End of Liberalism (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 10-11.

38. David Ricardo, The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1911).

39. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare, p. 120.

40. Ibid., 120.

41. Herbert Spencer, Social Statics (London, 1851), pp. 322-323.

42. John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, ed. Alburey Castell (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1947), pp. 9-10.

43. See Robert Paul Wolff, The Poverty of Liberalism (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1968), for an excellent refutation of the logic of On Liberty.

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46. Samuel Eliot Morison, The Oxford History of the American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 212-213.

47. Thornton Anderson, ed., Jacobson's Development of American Political Thought, 2nd Edition (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1961), p. 211.

48. Ibid., 280.

49. Ibid., 244 and Ch. 12, passim. See also, Max Farrand, The Framing of the Constitution of the United States (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1913).

50. Ibid., 253-254.

51. Ibid., 280.

52. Jacob E. Cooke, ed., "Report on Manufacturers," The Reports of Alexander Hamilton (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 128.

53. Ibid., 89.

54. Anderson, Development of American Political Thought, p. 314.

55. Ibid., Ch. 16.

56. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1945), p. 26.

57. Schapiro, Liberalism, pp. 80-81.

58. Abraham Lincoln, Selected Speechs, Messages, and Letters, ed. T. Harry Williams (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1957), p. 116.

59. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare, p. 112.

60. Sidney Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State, Chs. II-V.

# CHAPTER VI

# WELFARE LIBERALISM

## THE SPOKESMEN FOR WELFARE LIBERALISM

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, and continuing down into our own time, a number of forces combined which completely changed the attitudes of liberals toward government involvement in men's affairs. In place of leaving men alone to work their solitary way through life's tangles, modern liberals have sought to enlist the aid of government on the individual's behalf. The older, bourgeois liberalism removed restraints imposed by the old institutions of crown and church and allowed a middle class to flourish. Welfare liberalism has been an attempt not only to remove the newer restraints which followed in the wake of immense consolidations of wealth, but to give the individual the necessary tools for functioning in an increasingly complex world. Underlying both types of liberalism has been a constant factor: in both cases, human freedom has been the desideratum. At an earlier time, it made perfect sense to locate the impediments to human freedom in the entrenched traditions of church and state. Accordingly, a rising middle class fought to throw off those restraints. Bourgeois liberalism and the whole elaborate apparatus of laissez faire was the result. At a later time, it became clear to many thinkers that the fundamental assumptions concerning human nature in bourgeois liberalism--i.e., man as an atom

of self-interest, totally dedicated to the pursuit of material gain--was hopelessly inadequate, and new theories of human nature, economics, and politics had to be generated. These new theories, which are still in the process of being formed and most decidedly are not accepted by all people in the contemporary world, have resulted in the phenomenon of welfare liberalism.

The spokesmen for welfare liberalism have been surprisingly consistent in their utterances over a number of years and in a number of countries. L. T. Hobhouse, for example, writing in England in 1911 said:

> The sum and substance of the changes that I have mentioned [from the old liberalism to the new liberalism] may be expressed in the principle that the individual cannot stand alone, but that between him and the State there is a reciprocal obligation. He owes the state the duty of industriously working for himself and his family. He is not to exploit the labour of his young children, but to submit to the public requirements for their education, health, cleanliness and general well-being. On the other side society owes to him the means of maintaining a civilized standard of life, and this debt is not adequately discharged by leaving him to secure such wages as he can in the higgling of the market. [1]

What Hobhouse had to say in regard to England was echoed in the United States at about the same time. Woodrow Wilson, although he has often been identified as an apologist for the old liberal value of free competition, clearly asserted that it was government's responsibility to look out for the individual, not merely to leave him alone:

> ...it was no business of the law in the time of Jefferson to come into my house and see how I kept house. But when my

> house, when my so-called private property, became a great mine, and men went to dig out of the bowels of the earth things necessary for the industries of a whole nation, and when it came about that no individual owned these mines, that they were owned by great stock companies, then all the old analogies absolutely collapsed and it became the right of the government to go down into these mines to see whether human beings were properly treated in them or not;...[2]

By the end of World War II, welfare liberalism had become the accepted norm for a very large number of Americans. In 1944, Franklin Roosevelt declared:

> We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. "Necessitous men are not free men." People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.
>
> In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all--regardless of station, race or creed.
>
> Among these are:
>
> The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation;
>
> The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;
>
> The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;
>
> The right of every business man, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;
>
> The right of every family to a decent home;
>
> The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident and unemployment;
>
> The right to a good education.
>
> All of these rights spell security.... For unless there is security here at home there cannot be lasting peace in the world.[3]

Just five years later, "Mr. Republican" himself, Senator Robert A. Taft, indicated that he too accepted most of the ideas of welfare liberalism:

> I believe that the American people feel that with the high production of which we are now capable, there is enough left over to prevent extreme hardship and maintain a minimum standard floor under subsistence, education, medical care, and housing, to give a minimum standard of decent living and to all children a fair opportunity to get a start in life.[4]

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, welfare liberalism has been the way of government in the United States, no matter which party controlled the Congress or who occupied the White House. This has led some political commentators to posit and "end of ideology"[5] thesis, or consensus politics. The immense growth of the national government and the creation of such cabinet level departments as HEW and HUD clearly indicate how pervasive welfare liberalism is. There has been, of course, a great deal of talk during this period about a "resurgent conservatism."[6] Writers such as Peter Viereck, Ludwig von Mises, Russel Kirk, William F. Buckley, Jr., et al., have been most outspoken in condemning nearly every aspect of the prevailing mode. However, the "new conservatism"--whether it is a return to Burkean attitudes toward government, an attempt to reinstitute nineteenth century bourgeois liberalism, or merely some vicious variety of "anti-communist" medicine show--has not been a very potent force in American political life. No politician, for

example, who seriously attempted to dismantle the Social Security system could hope to survive his next election.

Richard M. Nixon, the President at the time of this writing, is classified as a conservative by some of his foes and as a liberal of the old order by others.[7] No attempt to analyze Mr. Nixon's theory of politics shall be made here. It is significant to note, however, that Mr. Nixon has proposed a number of programs that would have to be classifed as belonging to welfare liberalism. Important among these programs is the Family Assistance Plan, which, although it has been hotly opposed by contemporary liberals because it "does not go far enough," still cannot be dismissed as simply a return to some sort of "conservatism." It is also significant to note that Mr. Nixon has very recently proclaimed in public that he is now a "Keynesian,"[8] that he accepts at least certain parts of the economics of John Maynard Keynes. It is probably unnecessary to state that a large part of welfare liberalism looks to Keynes for its economics, rather than to the classical school.

The point of all this is simply to emphasize the obvious fact that the prevailing mode of government in the United States is welfare liberalism, or what Sidney Fine calls the "General-Welfare State."[9] Whether this state of affairs will continue into the future is a question that is not of concern here. What is of concern, however, is looking at the transition from bourgeois liberalism to welfare liberalism that occurred in the last decades of the nineteenth and the early decades of

the twentieth centuries. During this period, bourgeois liberalism was dominant in the United States, as indicated in the last chapter. However, it was not without its critics, even at its high-water mark. Critics of all sorts raised their voices in protest against the excesses of bourgeois liberalism, and eventually they drowned out the defenders of the status quo. Morris Cohen was, of course, one such critic, and we shall examine in detail some of his criticisms in the next two chapters. In the remainder of this chapter, however, we shall examine the general climate of criticism that developed during this period and see how the views of a great many men, operating on different hypotheses, coalesced to produce a greatly expanded view of human nature.

## THE CRITICS OF BOURGEOIS LIBERALISM

The critics of bourgeois liberalism do not fit neatly together under a single heading, or even under a number of headings. Some of them were religious men; others were academics--economists, sociologists, psychologists. A few were poets. A large number of them were themselves fiercely individualistic iconoclasts, even while they damned the evils of excessive individualism.

The protestant theologians who are generally lumped together as practitioners of the Social Gospel constitute one most interesting group of critics. Some of the outstanding proponents of the Social Gospel were theologians like Washington Gladding, Theodore Munger, Josiah Strong, and Walter Rauschenbush.[10] Their attacks on

bourgeois liberalism were inspired by their religious beliefs, not by a sentimental regard for man in the abstract, or by pragmatic notions of how best to run a government. It must be remembered that the objective of the social gospelers was the salvation of souls, but they held that individual salvation could not come about in an unethical society. They denounced bourgeois liberalism as "selfish, inhuman, unchristian, unethical, immoral, and barbaric."[11] Charles Worchester Clark asked, "Is it not evident that our economic system is diametrically opposed to Christian teaching? Christianity is the religion of peace, but individual classes are avowedly in a state of warfare. . . . Christianity means cooperation and the uplifting of the lowliest; business means competition and the survival of the strongest."[12] Josiah Strong wrote in a letter that "the existing competitive system. . . is thoroughly selfish, and therefore thoroughly unchristian."[13]

The social gospelers were more or less united in the idea that bourgeois liberalism "was based on unethical and unchristian premises; that classical political economy and social Darwinism were morally incompatible with Christianity."[14] The major influence of the social gospelers seems to have been to "discredit the let-alone policy and to clear away a formidable obstacle in the path of the general-welfare state."[15] Their criticisms, on the whole, were destructive rather than consciously constructive. "They pointed to various maladjustments in the social and economic order, but other

than a plea to individuals to be better Christians, they generally had little that was positive to offer in the way of a solution."[16] Nevertheless, by dissenting from the prevailing theories of bourgeois liberalism, the social gospelers performed a much needed task of preparing the soil for the implantation of new ideas.

Besides the social gospelers, there were a number of political opponents of bourgeois liberalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thornton Anderson breaks down political opposition to the prevailing mode during this period into two categories, the "revisionists" and the "fundamentalists."[17] He sees revisionists as those who moved only a little way from the mainstream, who sought relatively minor reforms rather than fundamental changes in the existing political and economic orders. The best known of the political revisionists are, of course, the Populists and the Progressives. The fundamentalists, on the other hand, were outspoken individuals who "called for a fundamental reorganization of the national economy."[18] Among the outstanding fundamentalists are Edward Bellamy, Henry George, and Lester Frank Ward.

An important group of revisionists was the "trust busters" who sought a return to the old ways of doing competitive business by breaking up huge trusts and monopolies. Their efforts resulted in such legislation as the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 and the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914. During this period, there were also numerous

trust busting attacks at the state level upon chain stores and chain banks.[19]

Perhaps a single example of one of the better known revisionists who tended toward the trust busting school will be sufficient to illustrate the thinking of this group. Henry Demarest Lloyd is remembered as the first of the "muckrakers," a group of journalists who expended a great deal of energy in exposing the excesses of major corporations. In Wealth Against Commonwealth, Lloyd attacked the practices of corporations which destroyed competition. He asserted that the world's wealth had been created by generations of labor, but the fruits of that labor had been denied to its true creators by the machinations of monopolists:

> Rome banished those who had been found to be public enemies by forbidding every one to give them fire and water. That was done by all to a few. In American it is done by a few to all. A small number of men are obtaining the power to forbid any but themselves to supply the people with fire in nearly every form known to modern life and industry, from matches to locomotives and electricity.[20]

In Man, the Social Creator, Lloyd asserted that the old theories of individualism are outmoded in a time of rapid industrialization:

> The philosophy of self-interest as the social solution was a good living and working synthesis in the days when civilization was advancing its frontiers twenty miles a day across the American continent, and every man for himself was the best social mobilization possible. But to-day it is a belated ghost that has overstayed the cock-crow. These were frontier morals. But this same, everyone for himself, becomes most immoral when the frontier is abolished and the pioneer becomes the fellow-citizen, and these frontier morals are most uneconomic when labour can be divided and the product multiplied. Most uneconomic, for they make

> closure the rule of industry, leading not to wealth but to that awful waste of wealth which is made visible to every eye in our unemployed--not hands alone, but land, machinery, and, most of all, hearts.[21]

As an answer to the grave social ills created by monopoly, Lloyd suggested a "general, evolutionary tendency of society toward co-operation in many forms."[22] In fact, society already shows many forms of cooperation:

> Witness all our municipalizations, co-operative stores, communities, nationalizations, social settlements, the living wage, arbitrations, labour laws, government contracting, our Children's Aid Societies, charities, labour colonies, industrial combinations pioneering the people, the universal preoccupation of our literature, grave and gay, with these themes.[23]

Still, Lloyd rejected Marxist solutions because "the problems were too big to be settled by any class movement, and society should not leave classes to fend for themselves."[24] Government would have to be used to develop society toward cooperation, but the force of government would have to be used carefully and sparingly, for "There have never been slaves more miserable than those of Sparta, where the State was the owner."[25] Everything will never be owned in common,

> But when any industry has become, in fact, a common field of effort, the people are to exercise a new right by applying to it the morals and the forms of the common welfare. This is the creed of the future, for it is positive, constructive, creative.[26]

This utopia was to be ushered in by reform, not by revolution. Lloyd believed that the elective process, and the general evolutionary

tendency of society, would eventually find the appropriate leaders and pass the proper laws.

A second group of revisionist critics are those whom Anderson calls the "equalizers." They are very closely related to the "trust busters." The distinction between the two groups lies in their method. Although they both accepted the idea of individualism as a high good, the trust busters wanted to break up large businesses in order to return to the days of individual enterprise, while the equalizers were more interested in bringing government to the aid of the "underdog" in any given dispute. According to the equalizers, conflicts must inevitably arise between groups with disparate interests--such as capital and labor or industry and agriculture. Government inaction in the name of some such principle as laissez faire in a dispute of this nature invariably was tantamount to action on behalf of the stronger party. Accordingly, the equalizers worked for various reforms on behalf of the weaker party. In this way, the forces in a dispute could be "equalized" and the struggle could proceed upon fairer grounds. Obviously, the equalizers, like the trust busters, look backwards to some of the old ideas of bourgeois liberalism, but the most significant thing about them is that they advocated government action--not laissez faire--to set the struggle straight. The agitation of the equalizers resulted in such legislation as minimum wage laws, the eight-hour day, inspection of factories, various forms

of workmen's compensation, the Federal Farm Loan Act of 1916, and perhaps even the Federal Farm Board of 1929.[27]

Probably the most outstanding of the equalizers was Woodrow Wilson. As pointed out earlier, Wilson has sometimes been called an apologist for the old bourgeois value of free competition, and certainly there is a greal deal of truth in this. In many of the reformers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a certain temper of nostalgia, a hearkening back to an imagined past that was somehow better than the present.[28] However, for all his nostalgia, Wilson still advocated government involvement to protect the underdog in a way that ran absolutely counter to the Spencer-Sumner theory of laissez faire. Because of this, he must be regarded as a critic of bourgeois liberalism, and not as an apologist for the status quo.

Wilson, both as Governor of New Jersey and as President, advocated reform measures which would place individuals on a more nearly equal footing. He was not merely against "big business" but he was against what he called "illicit" business, by which he meant huge trusts that stifle competition. "A trust does not bring efficiency to the aid of business;" Wilson said, "it buys efficiency out of business."[29] Wilson's efforts on behalf of the Clayton Antitrust Act and regulatory agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission are examples of his approach to "equalization." His theory might be summed up in these words: "Put all the business of America upon

the footing of economy and efficiency, and then let the race be to the strongest and the swiftest."[30] It may be that this is an example of "the collective wail of the American middle class,"[31] but it is still significant to note, once again, that Wilson's "equalizing" attacks urged a much larger role for government in what were previously considered to be men's private affairs.

The third group of revisionists critics which Anderson notes are those who "held that competition, while generally adequate, cannot be restored and enforced in all sectors of the economy. Many basic businesses, such as railroads and public utilities, are naturally monopolistic, and, even in other industries, large-scale enterprise is more economical than small competing firms."[32] Since this is true, this group argued, there should be no attempt to enforce competition where it would not serve the public good. Instead, large, natural monopolies should be regulated. This group could be called the "regulators," although Anderson does not use this term. The thinking of this group led to the establishment of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Hepburn Act of 1909--which regulated railroad rates and services--, the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, and other regulatory acts and agencies with which we are very familiar today. Theodore Roosevelt combined "trust busting" with the regulatory approach. In 1911, Roosevelt argued that many people saw antitrust legislation as an attempt

> ...to restore business to the competitive conditions in the middle of the last century.... Any such effort is foredoomed to failure, and, if successful, would be mischievous to the last degree.... This nation should definitely adopt the policy of attacking, not the mere fact of combination, but the evils and wrongdoing which so frequently accompany combination.... We should enter upon a course of supervision, control, and regulation of these great corporations--a regulation which we should not fear, if necessary, to bring to the point of control of monopoly prices.[33]

Obviously, the three ideas of the revisionists--trust busting, equalization, and regulation--are not mutually exclusive. Roosevelt is a good example of how the various ideas fuse in the action of a single individual. Let it be emphasized once again, however, that the important thing about all this--for our purposes--is to observe that the revisionist critics of bourgeois liberalism, no matter how they differed among themselves, or how far they were willing to go in attacking laissez faire, were united in advocating vastly increased action on the part of government. In this, the revisionist critics added immeasurably to the growth of welfare liberalism.

Revisionist criticism of bourgeois liberalism also came from academic circles. One of the first important groups of academic critics were the European-trained economists of the so-called historical school.[34] Some of the more notable members of this group were Richard T. Ely, Henry C. Adams, and Edwin R. A. Seligman. Like most students in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, these men went abroad--particularly to Germany--to pursue graduate studies. Here, a number of them were greatly influenced by the German

historical school of economics which was led by such men as Schmoller and Wagner. The "socialism of the chair" school was an extreme reaction to the Manchester school of economics and its American variant. The central thesis of the historical school was simply that man--viewed historically, rather than abstractly--is not purely an economic animal, that there is no such thing as "economic man."[35] "The modern school," Seligman declared:

> ...holds that the economic theories of any generation must be regarded primarily as the outgrowth of the peculiar conditions of time, place, and nationality, under which the doctrines were evolved, and that no particular set of tenets can arrogate to itself the claim of immutable truth, or the assumption of universal applicability to all countries or epochs.[36]

In other words, the notion of an abstract "economic man" who is nothing more than an atom of self-interest, seeking pecuniary gain above all else, is viewed by the economists of the historical school as completely fallacious. The older view of man was too simplistic because it simply refused to take into account the immense importance of human institutions: "They [the new-school economists] maintained that considerations of national honor, devotion to principle, and altruistic regard for one's fellow men figure prominently in the action of individuals in pursuit of a livlihood..."[37]

In 1885, the historical economists formed the American Economic Association. In its platform, which was written by Richard T. Ely, the new economists showed that their historical analysis of

man in his economic role had led them to assert a position diametrically opposed to bourgeois liberalism:

> We regard the state as an educational and ethical agency whose positive aid is an indispensable condition of human progress. While we recognize the necessity of individual initiative in industrial life, we hold that the doctrine of laissez-faire is unsafe in politics and unsound in morals; and that it suggests an inadequate explanation of the relations between the state and the citizens.[38]

E. J. Jones spoke out in defense of the platform of the American Economic Association in words that clearly display a deep aversion for the prevailing notions of bourgeois liberalism:

> On one point we certainly all differ from the general tone of Adam Smith and some of his so-called orthodox followers of the early half of this century, and that is as to his conception of the state. We do not regard it as a merely negative factor, the influence of which is most happy when it is smallest, but we recognize that some of the most necessary functions of a civilized society can be performed only by the state, and some others most efficiently by the state; that the state, in a word, is a permanent category of economic life, and not merely a temporary crutch which may be cast away when society becomes more perfect.[39]

In 1887, Professor Hency C. Adams published a monograph entitled Relation of the State to Industrial Action in which he attacked not only monopolies and other excesses of big business, but the whole notion of competition as a positive good:

> Suppose that of ten manufacturers nine have a keen appreciation of the evils that flow from protracted labor on the part of women and children; and, were it in their power, would gladly produce cottons without destroying family life, and without setting in motion those forces that must ultimately result in race-deterioration. But the tenth man has no such appreciations.... If now the state stands as an unconcerned spectator, whose duty is to put down a riot when a strike occurs (a duty which government in this country is

> giving up to private management), the nine men will be forced to conform to the methods adopted by the one. Their goods come into competition with his goods, and we who purchase do not inquire under what conditions they were manufactured. In this manner it is that men of the lowest character have it in their power to give the moral tone to the entire business community.[40]

The outcome of these attacks by the historical economists upon bourgeois liberalism was an advocacy of certain reform measures to combat the evils of a runaway industrialization. Their specific proposals are not of concern here. What is of concern is to note again that these men abandoned the old principle of governmental non-interference and "proposed...methods of employing the state as an agency to combat the problems of an industrial age and to promote the general welfare."[41]

Turning now to the "fundamental critics" we enter somewhat murkier waters. The revisionists--both practical politicians like Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, and such theoreticians as the members of the American Economic Association--suggested a number of reforms and regulations that, from the perspective of time, do not seem to depart too radically from the prevailing mode. To be sure, they rejected laissez faire, which is so vital to bourgeois liberalism, but they did so by suggesting reforms that were really nothing more than extensions--although sometimes considerable extensions--of things government already did. After all, for all the obeisance paid to "hands-off" in the nineteenth century, there was always <u>some</u> consensus that government had certain regulatory powers.

Even the constitution allows this. Laissez faire was never completely adhered to, although it constituted the general temper of an age. The revisionist critics merely extended constitutional provisions for government regulation into new domains, and while this was most unsettling to large numbers of people, it cannot be seen as any sort of "revolution."

The fundamentalist critics are another story altogether. They advocated radical changes in the basic economic and political orders. Needless to say, very few of the suggestions of the fundamentalist critics were enacted into law. Compared to the fundamentalists, the revisionists' ideas seem rather mild, and this nation has consistently chosen their way of moderate reform rather than the way of radical change. However, the fundamentalists still performed an important service by bringing to light certain evils and by stimulating thought concerning the amelioration of those evils.

Henry George is an excellent example of the fundamentalist critic. In Progress and Poverty[42] George advanced the thesis that poverty persists despite enormous progress in productivity because of land monopoly.[43] The land was made by God, George insisted, and therefore no man had a right to exclude his fellows from the use of it:

> If there seems anything strange in the idea that all men have equal and unalienable rights to the use of the earth, it is merely that habit can blind us to the most obvious truths. Slavery, polygamy, cannibalism, the flattening of children's heads, or the squeezing of their feet, seem perfectly natural

> to those brought up where such institutions or customs exist. . . . It is only among an insignificant fraction of the people who have lived on the earth that the idea that the earth itself could be made private property has ever obtained. . . . What more preposterous than that one tenant for a day of this rolling sphere should collect rent for it from his co-tenants, or sell to them for a price what was here ages before him and will be here ages after him?[44]

George accepted the classical economists' theory of rent value: "the rent of land is determined by the excess of its produce over that which the same application can secure from the least productive land in use."[45] In the city, this concept of rent value is slightly different. Here it does not depend upon the fertility of the soil, "but upon monopoly value arising from strategic location, from the number of people passing a plot of land, from its access to docks, railroads, or markets, or its desirability for a residence."[46] At any rate, the rent of land increases-whether it be in the country or the city through no effort of the individual "owner," but rather because of the growth, or progress, of the community in general. This results in what George called an "unearned increment."[47] It is the unearned increment which allows certain individuals to accumulate huge fortunes, while others scrabble for mere existence. The more community progress there is, the greater will be the unearned increment. The larger the unearned increment, the more power will accrue to the holders of land in fee simple, and the poorer will be those unfortunate enough not to own land. This, George suggested, is the state of affairs in the United States because of generations of

speculation in land, often aided by government. His solution to this egregious problem was a radical one. George did not suggest confiscation of privately-owned property in the communistic manner, which might have been a logical outcome of his economic analysis. Instead, he suggested the "single tax," a form of taxation which would destroy the landholder's advantages over his fellow men:

> And so it is not necessary, in order to secure equal rights to land, to make an equal division of land. All that is necessary to do is to collect the ground rents for the common benefit. Nor, to take ground rents for the common benefit, is it necessary that the State should actually take possession of the land and rent it out from year to year, or from term to term, as some ignorant people suppose. It can be done in a much more simple and easy manner by means of the existing machinery of taxation. All it is necessary to do is to abolish all other forms of taxation until the weight of taxation rests upon the value of land irrespective of improvements, and takes the ground rent for the public benefit.[48]

In this way, George contended, the landholder would be transformed into some sort of public servant whose function was to collect taxes for the public good. Incidentally, Henry George's ideas were immensely popular with a considerable minority of people just before the turn of the century. There were hundreds of single-tax study groups in the United States, and estimations of the total sales of Progress and Poverty run as high as two million.[49] Twice Henry George ran for Mayor of New York, and almost got himself elected. A young man by the name of Morris Cohen was quite active in one of those campaigns, although he was supporting Daniel de Leon for Assemblyman, and not the more moderate Henry George.[50]

There were many other fundamental critics of bourgeois liberalism during this same era. Lester Frank Ward, for example, advocated what he called "sociocracy," which was "the art which corresponds to the science of sociology.... This general social art, the scientific control of the social forces by the collective mind of society for its advantage, in strict homology with the practical arts of the industrial world, is what I have hitherto given the name Sociocracy."[51]

Ward first advanced his ideas of sociocracy in a book that, eventually, was very widely read, although it was not seized upon when it was first published. Dynamic Sociology[52] was a direct rebuttal of Spencer's Social Statics. In it, Ward asserted his central idea that evolution through individual effort is hideously wasteful and hideously corrupting. Instead, he advocated the idea that cooperative action be taken to combat social ills, just as cooperative action was often taken to overcome natural obstacles. Once this concept was adopted, Ward contended, government could be placed on a sounder scientific basis, education could be improved immeasurably, and planning would replace brute competition.[53]

Many other fundamental critics of bourgeois liberalism could be mentioned here. Certainly the whole school of utopian writers--the most famous of whom is Edward Bellamy--can be viewed as fundamental critics of the existing order. But these examples are sufficient to demonstrate the thesis of this chapter: in the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a climate of criticism developed that eventually brought bourgeois liberalism to its knees. Agitation for reform in all sectors of the society was buoyed up by the writings of politicians, academic people, Christian ministers, and journalists of all sorts. This monumental assault upon the old system of laissez faire was not coordinated in any way; different critics held completely different views of things. But they were united in their emphasis upon the use of government to effect social ends, and it is this uneasy unanimity which ushered in welfare liberalism.

## AN EXPANDED VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE

In Chapter V, the attachment of bourgeois liberalism to three assumptions concerning human nature was developed in some detail. These assumptions were: 1) that men are atoms of self-interest, i.e., that men are totally selfish; 2) that men must somehow be motivated out of a basic, "natural" lethargy before they will do productive work; 3) that men are totally rational creatures, that somehow they balance pleasure and pain in all their functions in order to insure their best interests. In the latter years of the nineteenth century, however, the various critics of bourgeois liberalism abandoned this "classical" view of human nature and developed an altered and greatly expanded view of human nature that seemed to square more favorably with the new learning in psychology, economics, anthropology, and virtually every other field of study. Today, no

informed person could possibly say that human nature is simply this or simply that. We have learned a great deal about the human condition, but we realize more fully than ever how terribly ignorant we really are. Nevertheless, the investigations of the past half century--and the critical judgments that came out of those investigations--have led to a complete repudiation of the old, simplistic view of human nature.

The first concept to fall--and, since it is the basis of all the rest, the most important--was the whole idea of egoism, or human selfishness. It became apparent to large numbers of people that there was something radically wrong with the concept of self-interest as expressed by the bourgeois liberals. As Girvetz pointed out:

> What is self-interest? Merely to ask the question is to discover that the term is so vague as to be utterly meaningless. The self is anything it happens to be identified with; and self-interest may be interest in amassing a fortune, in helping down-and-outers, in agitating for social reform, in hunting big game in Africa, or in risking one's life to further the revolutionary struggle of some remote people.
>
> But to say this is to divest self-interest of any special meaning. Self-interest acquires meaning, only because by such designation certain types of conduct seem to be excluded. If no variety of conduct is excluded, and if a selfish individual may indeed identify himself with and act in behalf of any objective, clearly, to say that all conduct is selfish is to say that all conduct is conduct--an indubitable but hardly significant proposition.[54]

Obviously, the bourgeois liberals did not intend to assert such a tautology as this. By not examining their assumptions, however, this is precisely what they did. Today, it is quite clear that a very large number of people for a very long time erroneously identified the

pecuniary drives of certain individuals--i.e., the leaders of nineteenth century bourgeois culture--as synonymous with "human nature" en masse. Some men are so driven, and for the past two or three centuries in the western world, a great many men have been so driven. But just as obviously, not all men make a desire for monetary profit central to their whole being. In fact, in the world at large, only a minority of human beings finds satisfaction in accumulating riches. In some cultures the idea would be preposterous; in others it would be sinful. As anthropological and psychological data began to flow into universities and other research centers from all corners of the earth, it became more and more apparent that the idea of equating self-interest with pecuniary gain was completely unwarranted. It became abundantly clear that only certain people under certain conditions can be viewed as dominated by a desire for pecuniary gain. Most of the people in the world simply are not so motivated, and this makes the argument that acquisitiveness is the dominant mode of self-interest--and that this type of self-interest is basic to human nature--hopelessly inadequate.

> ...the otherwise empty concept of egoism...was identified with acquisitiveness, or, more precisely, with the quest for pecuniary gain which passes for the profit motive. As a result, the profit motive could be understood without reference to its institutional origins and historical antecedents; it received its credentials from human nature, and, like human nature, it was thought ineluctable, given--and therefore accepted. The identification of self-interest and the profit motive was thus mutually advantageous; self-interest acquired a specific meaning, and the profit motive was lifted out of the flux of history, was fixed, fastened, and made firm.

> In this fashion the datum to be explained became a principle of explanation. The contingent and, from any long historical point of view, the novel motives of the assertive, entrepenurial middle classes were read into human nature, as so described, to account for the operation of these motives and to argue that they are as indefeasible as human nature itself.[55]

Certain psychologists--William James, most notably--went even further than this to destroy the logic of self-interest as an explanation for human activity. James, as is well known, refused to separate the self concept from the larger world which comprises the self and everything else:

> But what is this abstract numerical principle of identity, this "Number One" within me, for which, according to proverbial philosophy, I am supposed to keep so constant a "lookout"? Is it the inner nucleus of my spiritual self...? Or is it perhaps the concrete stream of my thought in its entirety, or some one section of the same?...Or, finally, can it be the mere pronoun I? Surely it is none of these things, that self for which I feel such hot regard...To have a self that I can <u>care for</u>, nature must first present me with some <u>object</u> interesting enough to make me instinctively wish to appropriate it for its <u>own</u> sake, and out of it to manufacture one of those material, social, or spiritual selves, which we have already passed in review....<u>The words</u> ME, <u>then, and</u> SELF, <u>so far as they arouse feeling and connote emotional worth, are</u> OBJECTIVE <u>designations, meaning</u> ALL THE THINGS <u>which have the power to produce in a stream of consciousness excitement of a certain peculiar sort</u>....
>
> To sum up...<u>we see no reason to suppose that self-love is primarily, or secondarily, or ever, love for one's mere principle of conscious identity</u>. It is always love for something which, as compared with that principle, is superficial, transient, liable to be taken up or dropped at will.[56]

Once these basic questions concerning the self and the profit motive were asked, the whole "selfish system" that had been accepted for so long began to crumble. It is not yet completely dead, of course;

it still makes up a large part of conventional folk wisdom, as can be demonstrated by looking at the institutional advertising of any corporation in modern America.[57] Nevertheless, the idea of human selfishness as an overall explanation for behavior is not respectable anywhere that men have been allowed to think critically about the complexities of existence.

The second assumption of the bourgeois liberals--i.e., that men are basically lazy and must somehow be "motivated" out of their lethargy, was similarly demonstrated to be palpably false. Sapir, for example, pointed out that there is a profound "spirit of workmanship"[58] among people who have no need at all to work:

> In the manufacture of their weapons, utensils, and other articles, they...spend...hour after hour in laboriously striking pieces of iron with a stone hammer, for the purpose of forming spear or arrowheads, or in improving the shape of a bow, etc., even though there be no necessity, immediate or prospective, to stimulate them to such efforts. The incentive is evidently a spirit of emulation, each one priding himself on being able to produce work which will excel, or at least compare not unfavorably with, that of his neighbors.[59]

Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey, William McDougall, Peirce, James, Mead, and a great host of philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists, and other intellectual laborers have pretty well destroyed the idea of "psychological quietism" as a concept worth dealing with at all. There is simply too much evidence to support the view that men do what they do for a great complex of reasons, to cling to the idea that men are basically lazy, and act only out of fear

of starving. Why does a man lie on his back for years to paint pictures on a ceiling? Surely, it is not enough to say that Michelangelo was afraid he would not eat if he did not do this particular kind of work. To take a more mundane example, why does a man hike for hours through swarms of black flies and mosquitoes only to spend a few hours wading about in a wretchedly frigid trout stream? No "hedonistic calculus" and no principle of psychological quietism is adequate to explain such bizarre behavior. In fact, such spurious principles are not adequate to explain anything at all about human life. As Dewey put it:

> It is "natural" for activity to be agreeable. It tends to find fulfillment, and finding an outlet is itself satisfactory, for it marks partial accomplishment. If productive activity has become so inherently unsatisfactory that men have to be artificially induced to engage in it, this fact is ample proof that the conditions under which work is carried on balk the complex of activities instead of promoting them, irritate and frustrate natural tendencies instead of carrying them forward to fruition. Work then becomes labor... Paradise Regained means the accumulation of investments such that a man can live upon their return without labor. There is, we repeat, too much truth in this picture. But it is not a truth concerning original human nature and activity. It concerns the form human impulses have taken under the influence of a specific social environment. If there are difficulties in the way of social alteration--as there certainly are--they do not lie in an original aversion of human nature to servicable action, but in the historic conditions which have differentiated the work of the laborer for wages from that of the artist, adventurer, sportsman, soldier, administrator, and speculator.[60]

Finally, the idea that men are totally rational in making decisions for pleasure vs. pain, to work rather than to follow the natural and lazy bent of their spirits, was also destroyed. The importance

of the teachings of Freud and his followers in this regard can hardly be overestimated. No matter what one may think of Freudianism in general, or what one may think of any particular aspect of it, there is one result of Freud's teaching that is inescapable: since Freud, men have learned that "human nature" has a very large component that is not rational. We do not fully know why we do what we do; perhaps we never shall. But we do know that behind our apparently rational actions there is a whole domain of darkness and mystery that cannot be disregarded in any serious account of human nature. As William McDougall said, "man is only a little bit reasonable and to a great extent very unintelligently moved in quite unreasonable ways."[61] It is not to rational man that a cigarette company appeals when it inundates the nation's living rooms with flickering pictures of men on horseback that are somehow--but how?--associated with its befiltered, flip-topped product. And it is not rational men (and women) who vote for a candidate because of the way he "looks," or because of the motion pictures he has appeared in. Examples are legion, but these are sufficient to illustrate the fact that irrationality is just as much a part of "human nature" as rationality--perhaps more so. Reason may be man's best hope, but the man who strives for reason must himself be aware of the irrationality of much of human life. This is precisely what the bourgeois liberals did not realize when they assumed that man is a totally rational creature.

In repudiating the psychological assumptions of bourgeois liberalism, welfare liberalism has thrown out much, but has also retained a great deal. The idea of human freedom is the desideratum in both cases, as pointed out earlier. But welfare liberalism does not assume that man must act in certain ways, "namely after the model of a hypothetical businessman exclusively absorbed in balancing profits against loss."[62] There is no room in welfare liberalism for "economic man" or for any other abstraction which results in the creation and perpetuation of degrading conditions for human life. The bourgeois liberals "elaborated the logical consequences of an abstract definition suggested by the observation of human behavior in the very special, relatively novel, and possibly fugitive set of circumstances which a small part of the world presented in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."[63] Welfare liberalism, on the other hand, has expanded its view of human nature enormously. There is no longer such assurance of what human nature <u>really</u> is. But, for all his hesitancy in declaring what is natural in human affairs, the modern liberal does know that "human nature is compatible with considerable variation in our institutional arrangements...there is...no unbreakable link between human nature and the institutions which have given the commercial and industrial middle classes their position of hegemony in the Great Society."[64]

In other words, welfare liberalism is willing to accept the Benthamite dictum of the greatest good for the greatest number, but

not by deducing "truths" from an immutable concept of human nature. Rather, welfare liberalism is willing to explore, tamper with, and even trample upon all sorts of institutions, if such trampling will allow more human beings to act in their own best interests. Whether or not such an idea can have a salutary effect upon society without leading to utter chaos is still an open question. Certainly a thinker of the stature of Santayana did not like much that went under the name of welfare liberalism.[65] Nevertheless, at the time of this writing, it seems that welfare liberalism is still in the ascendency. As Sidney Fine said, "...the ideological conflict of the late nineteenth century between the advocates of laissez faire and the advocates of the general-welfare state [has] been resolved in theory, in practice, and in public esteem in favor of the general-welfare state."[66] It seems unnecessary to add that a major reason for the triumph of welfare liberalism was the greatly expanded view of human nature--meaning human motivation and human possibility in infinite variety--that grew out of the general climate of criticism in the past three-quarters of a century.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. L. T. Hobhouse, Liberalism (London: Oxford University Press, 1911, 1964), p. 86.

2. Woodrow Wilson, The New Freedom (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1913), p. 24.

3. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Nothing to Fear (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946), p. 396.

4. Robert A. Taft, quoted in Morris K. Udall, "A Scandal Called Welfare," The Progressive, May, 1971, p. 13.

5. Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960), passim.

6. Thornton Anderson, Jacobson's Development of American Political Thought: A Documentary History, 2nd Edition (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1960), Ch. 28.

7. Garry Wills, Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), passim.

8. Detroit Free Press, editorial, July 11, 1971, p. 2B.

9. Sidney Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State: A Study of Conflict in American Thought, 1865-1901 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1956, 1964).

10. Ibid., 170, 172.

11. Ibid., 173.

12. Ibid., 173.

13. Ibid., 173.

14. Ibid., 196.

15. Ibid., 196.

16. Ibid., 197.

17. Anderson, Development of American Political Thought, Chs. 23, 24. I have relied very heavily upon Anderson's analysis of populism and progressivism in this section of Chapter VI.

18. Ibid., 477.

19. Ibid., 477.

20. Henry Demarest Lloyd, Wealth Against Commonwealth (New York: Harper, 1894), p. 9.

21. Henry Demarest Lloyd, Man, the Social Creator (New York: Doubleday, 1906), p. 83.

22. Anderson, Development of American Political Thought, p. 481.

23. Ibid., 481.

24. Ibid., 481.

25. Lloyd, Wealth Against Commonwealth, p. 506.

26. Lloyd, Man, the Social Creator, p. 88.

27. Anderson, Development of American Political Thought, pp. 477-478.

28. For an excellent elucidation of nostalgia in Woodrow Wilson's thinking--as well as in the thinking of several other major figures in American politics--see Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York: Vintage Books, 1957).

29. Anderson, Development of American Political Thought, p. 483.

30. Wilson, The New Freedom, p. 263.

31. Hofstadter, American Political Tradition, p. 255.

32. Anderson, Development of American Political Thought, p. 478.

33. Theodore Roosevelt, "The Trusts, the People, and the Square Deal," The Outlook, November 18, 1911, pp. 653-655.

34. Morris R. Cohen, American Thought (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 119.

35. Ibid., 119-120.

36. Edwin R. A. Seligman, "Continuity of Economic Thought" in Richard T. Ely, et al., Science Economic Discussion (New York, 1886), pp. 1-2, 21-22.

37. Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State, p. 205.

38. Richard T. Ely, "Report of the Organization of the American Economic Association," Publications of the American Economic Association, I (1887), pp. 6-7.

39. Ibid., I, 26.

40. Henry C. Adams, "Relations of the State to Industrial Action," Publications of the American Economic Association, I (1887), pp. 502, 505-506.

41. Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State, p. 251.

42. Henry George, Progress and Poverty (New York: Appleton, 1880). Incidentally, many of the ideas of Henry George were anticipated by Thomas Paine in the tract "Agrarian Justice." This tract was written while Paine was in France during the winter of 1795-96. A matter of great concern to the revolutionaries was what to do with the land of the emigres, those aristocrats who had fled the country during the revolution. One faction demanded confiscation of the emigre land and a "Share-the-land" program in general. Another faction sought to preserve the land for the aristocrats until a future, quieter day. Paine suggested a middle course that would allow heavy taxation of land in lieu of confiscation, and thus anticipated Henry George's idea of the single-tax, as well as many of the ideas of the English Chartists.

43. Anderson, Development of American Political Thought, p. 506.

44. Henry George, Social Problems (New York: Sterling, 1894), pp. 277-279.

45. George, Progress and Poverty, p. 151.

46. Anderson, Development of American Political Thought, p. 507.

47. Ibid., 507.

48. George, Social Problems, pp. 282-283.

49. Henry George, Jr., "How the Book Came to Be Written," in Progress and Poverty (Fiftieth Anniversay Edition; New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1942), p. xii.

50. Morris R. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949), p. 97.

51. Lester Frank Ward, Outlines of Sociology (New York: Macmillan, 1898), p. 292.

52. Lester Frank Ward, Dynamic Sociology (New York: Appleton, 1883).

53. See Sidney Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State, pp. 253-264, for an excellent analysis of Ward's full thoughts.

54. Harry K. Girvetz, From Wealth to Welfare: The Evolution of Liberalism (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1950), pp. 130-131. Once again, I have relied quite heavily upon Girvetz's analysis of the transition from bourgeois to welfare liberalism. It seems to me that his account of the attack upon the traditional view of human nature is sound, although the reservation noted earlier (p. 153, note 5) still applies. See also Sidney Fine, Laissez Faire and the General-Welfare State and Robert Cumming, Human Nature and History for excellent analyses of this phenomenon.

55. Ibid., 131.

56. William James, Principles of Psychology (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1890), pp. 318-320. Capitals and italics are James'.

57. See, for example, Marshall McLuhan, The Mechanical Bride (New York: Vanguard Press, 1951), p. 133. Here is displayed an advertisement sponsored by the National Association of Manufacturers which proclaims to one and all that the desire for profits is "natural" and proper. This advertisement appeared several years ago, but the same thing still appears in a slightly more sophisticated form, as the most cursory perusal of Business Week, Time, or the Wall Street Journal will show.

58. Girvetz, Wealth to Welfare, p. 134.

59. Cited by Melville J. Herskovits, The Economic Life of Primitive People (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), p. 16.

60. John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct (New York: The Modern Library, Random House, Inc., 1930), pp. 123-124.

61. William McDougall, An Introduction to Social Psychology (Boston: John W. Luce & Company, 1926), p. 11.

62. Girvetz, Wealth to Welfare, p. 147.

63. Ibid., 147.

64. Ibid., 150.

65. George Santayana, Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), pp. 42-189 and George Santayana, Dominations and Powers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 436-438, and passim.

# CHAPTER VII

## A LIBERAL FAITH

It is against the background of the climate of criticism engendered by the excesses of bourgeois liberalism that Morris Cohen's own brand of liberalism must be understood. Cohen's life spanned the great years of this era of criticism, and he was one of the most outspoken advocates of the programs of welfare liberalism. As pointed out earlier, Cohen was first and foremost a critical philosopher, rather than a philosophical system-builder in the grand manner. One of the difficulties in understanding Cohen is that most of his writings are critical attacks upon what he considers to be the underlying causes of bad institutions, bad laws, and bad ideas, i.e., upon the theoretical underpinnings of bourgeois liberalism. But, as we saw in Chapter III, if the criticisms are carefully examined a metaphysical system, of sorts, emerges. Cohen's metaphysic rested upon the three foundation blocks of logic, scientific method, and the principle of polarity. It was the application of these three closely related principles to various problem areas that led Cohen to assert a creed that is generally classified as that of a liberal. Cohen was quite pleased to wear this title. In fact, one of his major essay collections--which was published shortly before his death and is a kind of summing up--is entitled The Faith of a Liberal.[1] This title is significant, for Cohen realized as well as anyone else that

ultimately any system of thought or program of action--no matter how rigorously designed--must contain a component of unprovable belief. This is true in scientific hypothesis building--again, as demonstrated in Chapter III--and it is equally true in social and political life. Cohen made reason central to his whole system, but he realized that reason can only take us so far; beyond reason there is mysticism, and there comes a point where we simply must have faith. We can, of course, subject our various hypotheses to constant verification and modify them bit by bit as new evidence comes to light. This is how science proceeds; indeed, it is how civilization itself proceeds. The political, economic, and social views advanced in The Faith of a Liberal and elsewhere are nothing more than an extension of these ideas into the domain of human society. It is this extension which makes up Cohen's liberal faith, and it is this which will be examined in this chapter.

Before going into the details of Cohen's liberal faith, it would perhaps be illuminating to survey some of the programs, policies, and institutional changes that he advocated throughout his long career. In this way, the general tone of his liberalism and his connection with the climate of criticism outlined in the last chapter should become clear.

Cohen's early writings were almost exclusively in the realm of technical philosophy. In 1909, for example, an abstract of a paper which he read at the annual meeting of the American Philosophical

Association entitled "Kant's Doctrine of the Summum Bonum" appeared in the Philosophical Review.[2] A year later, the Journal of Philosophy published his first full-length article, "Conception of Philosophy in Recent Discussion."[3] This was followed nearly every year by at least one major article on a technical subject in a learned journal, until his health failed at the beginning of World War II.[4]

As early as 1915, however, the young professor of philosophy at CCNY began to step out of his philosopher's cloister. In that year, an unsigned editorial appeared in Herbert Croly's brand-new liberal magazine, the New Republic.[5] The editorial, written by Cohen, was the first of a long series of editorials, general essays, and reviews which Cohen published through the years in the New Republic. Often they were unsigned, or appeared above the pseudonym "Philonous."[6] This first editorial was entitled "The Bill of Rights Theory."[7] Although it was rather vague and inconclusive, it is important to look at because it established the tone for the liberal tracts which Cohen would write over the next thirty years. In this instance, Cohen pointed out that bills of rights of the national and state constitutions resulted from the natural rights theory of the eighteenth century, which, in turn, "proved a powerful weapon against established abuses by inducing men to appeal to rational principles of what ought to be."[8] Thus bills of rights "were not intended to restrain 'popular passion' but rather to serve as moral checks on governments."[9] In

other words, bills of rights are summary statements of the individualistic theories of natural rights and limited government under which the nation throve in its early years when it contained "a sparsely settled agricultural people under a free land economy, without the fear of invasion by powerful neighbors...."[10]

With the growth of industrialism in the post-Civil War era, however, this old conception of natural rights ceased to be effective. Now, there was a new class of industrial workers in the growing cities whose interests were often inimical to the interests of the traditional agrarian and commercial classes. Unfortunately, it was these latter classes from which the judiciary was usually chosen. Under the peculiar system of government in the United States, which has entrusted the safe-keeping of constitutional rights to its judiciary rather than to its legislature, the judges soon found themselves at war--because of their natural class bias--with both the legislatures and the working class. Always, of course, the judges found against legislation favored by the working class, in the name of upholding the various bills of rights and other constitutional restraints: "...when legislatures, more responsive because in closer touch with the needs of working people, began to pass measures to relieve the latter, our courts--influenced by the leaders of the bar--began to find such legislation unconstitutional."[11]

The injustice of the various courts' striking down of child labor laws, minimum wage and hour laws, laws regarding working

conditions, etc., was extremely offensive to Cohen. He attacked these decisions as being both unjust and illogical. He said "the bills of rights, originally intended to protect men against political oppression, have become the legal basis of economic exploitation."[12] This has come about because the bench and bar have conspired, unwittingly or otherwise, to invent "a new legal doctrine previously unknown to jurisprudence, to wit, that the right to make contracts is itself property."[13] Cohen went on to marshal historical evidence and logical arguments to demonstrate that making up such legal doctrines was wholly unwarranted, that judges have no right to "make laws" in the name of natural rights which do not stand up to the test of socially desirable ends. If constitutional restraints incorporated in the bills of rights, and the judicial decisions growing out of these restraints, "are to be justified, they must, like other human works, be justified by their actual fruits in human experience."[14] The profound influence of Peirce and James on Cohen's thinking is very obvious here, as it is in much of Cohen's work. There is a very strong pragmatic streak in Cohen's liberalism, as, indeed, there is in all of welfare liberalism.

At the end of the editorial, Cohen insisted that somehow (he does not specify how, but instead quotes Emerson at length upon the unreason of modern men being forced to "grope among the dry bones of the past") the members of the nation's bench and bar must extend their vision beyond merely interpreting and re-interpreting bills of rights to favor the dominant class. The law must become, in other

words, a more fluid, more living thing, able to adapt to changed situations. Obviously, all this is rather vague, and no doubt was highly unsatisfactory to most legal practitioners of the era. In later essays, Cohen did occasionally recommend some specific remedies for specific problems,[15] although it must be remembered that most of the time he functioned at a theoretical rather than at a practical level. In this particular essay, he was interested in speaking only in the most general terms. As vague as it is, however, the essay does reveal the fact that very early in his career, Cohen was committed to the ideas of change, of adaptation, of examination of fundamental and widely accepted truths--about both human institutions and problems in technical philosophy. And this willingness to change, as previously indicated, is central to the liberal temper. The critical spirit revealed in this early essay stayed with Cohen to the end of his days. It is the driving force behind his liberalism. Thus is Cohen connected to the critics of bourgeois liberalism discussed in the preceding chapter.

Cohen aimed a number of critical attacks at entrenched legal institutions, but he also embraced many other "causes" associated with liberalism in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1920, for example, he, along with most American liberals, was outraged at the Sacco-Vanzetti case and wrote an essay comparing this unhappy event to the Dreyfus affair.[16] Another essay on the Sacco-Vanzetti case followed in 1929.[17] At various times, Cohen wrote articles

condemning immigration quotas,[18] racism in general,[19] and religious bigotry.[20] When the Bertrand Russell case broke, Cohen was particularly outspoken in defending academic freedom,[21] and he helped with the founding of the American Association of University Professors.[22] In the years preceding the fascist takeover of much of Europe, Cohen spoke out against Franco's rebels in Spain and supported various Loyalist causes in the United States, including some that were later declared "subversive."[23] The labor of his last days in combating anti-Semitism was mentioned in Chapter II, and will be examined in greater detail in the chapter following this.

Obviously, Cohen's credentials as a liberal were all in order. He embraced many, if not all, of the causes associated with liberalism in the 1920's, 30's, and 40's. Behind the various "causes," however, was a keen philosophical mind at work. Cohen arrived at his liberal position through rigorous, logical examination of human problems. He was not motivated by simple sentimentality for man en masse. In fact, he regarded such platitudes as the Biblical dictum to "love thy neighbor as thyself" as so much arrant nonsense:

> I do not believe in the adequacy of the usual sentimental interpretation of the Golden Rule to love my neighbor as myself. My neighbor has a right to think the form of my love for myself quite foolish and to resent having it inflicted upon him. Nor do I see any good in loving my neighbor's wife and children as my own. Love means discrimination and preference, and the obverse of that is natural aversion. Civil society depends not on blindness or insensibility to the loathsome traits of our fellow mortals, but upon respecting their rights without taking them to our bosoms.[24]

These are not the words of a dewy-eyed sentimentalist whose heart bleeds for suffering humanity. They are the words of a man who thought long and hard about the human condition and came to certain tentative conclusions about how men can inhabit this single planet without tearing each other apart. It is these conclusions, arrived at by way of logic, scientific method, and the principle of polarity that make up the substance of Cohen's liberalism.

At times, Cohen's liberalism seems anachronistic. It is as if he were looking backward to the bourgeois liberalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This, however, is illusory, for Cohen's liberalism was the liberalism of the general-welfare state, not the individualistic liberalism of John Stuart Mill. Although he sometimes uses the rhetoric of the older liberalism, he does so in a completely different context. For example, Cohen insisted upon the right of the philosopher to philosophize without any thought of ulterior justification. He defended this right in terms of "the division of labor:" "I believe in the division of labor.... humanity would probably perish from cold if everyone produced food, and would certainly starve if everyone made clothes or built houses."[25] At first glance, it seems that Cohen is following Adam Smith here. Smith's defense of the division of labor, however, was built upon the idea that everybody has "a natural propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another,"[26] and that if this "natural propensity" is not tampered with, the wealth of a nation will be increased because each

individual, pursuing his selfish desire to trade, is led by an "invisible hand" to benefit the commonwealth. Smith did not banish philosophers from his commonwealth, as Plato did the poets from his republic, but he saw them only as some sort of moral policemen who could help maintain order so business--private business--could flourish. Cohen rejected every aspect of this argument, retaining only the term "division of labor." In the first place, it was obvious to Cohen--and to all other critics of bourgeois liberalism--that all men are not dedicated to trade. There is no such thing as a "natural propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another." Cohen saw himself first, last, and always as a philosopher, dedicated to the pursuit of impartial truth: "...philosophers...are ordained as priests to keep alive the sacred fires on the altar of impartial truth, and I have...faithfully endeavored to keep my oath of office as well as the circumstances would permit."[27] He could point to the example of his own life, in other words, to refute Smith's argument concerning man's "natural propensities." Cohen held to this faith, moreover, even during wartime and insisted that the division of labor principle should allow him to continue tending the "sacred fires" without impediment; society had no right to demand that a philosopher lend his voice and talents to the cause of war, even if national survival were at stake. A philosopher's only duty is to philosophize:

> ...when I look upon my professional colleagues who enlisted their philosophies in the war, who added their shrill voices to the roar of cannons and their little drops

> of venom to the torrents of national hatreds, I feel...they... should write apologies for their course.[28]

There is no "invible hand" here, no idea of enriching the commonwealth. And no moral policeman. In this, Cohen was very much like the old Oxford don who was asked by a young officer recently returned from Flanders bloody field what he had done to help the war effort. The don replied, "Sir, I represent the civilization you are purportedly saving." This was the tack Morris Cohen took. He was a philosopher; that was his task in life, and he defended it as vitally important to civilization itself, in a way that transcends any temporal affair, no matter how desperate:

> We hold the benefits of civilization not in fee simple, to our heirs forever, but by knights' service. Much as we may leave to our successors, we can never manage it so that they shall be entirely free from toil, pain, and the agonies of death. Let us not, therefore, willfully impoverish their life by throwing away any of the things that have served as consolations to so many since the ancient days--among which are the writings of the divine Plato and even of the altogether unheroic Cicero, who so tragically illustrates the failure of scholars in politics.[29]

In other words, the division of labor principle extends far beyond bricklayers and bakers, and the "wealth" of a nation includes a great deal more than gold bullion, manufactured goods, or foodstuffs. Philosophy enriches civilization too, and the philosopher's right to pursue his calling must be jealously guarded, forever.

A second--and much more important--element in Cohen's liberalism that can also give the illusion of looking backward to the heyday of bourgeois liberalism was the emphasis he placed upon

reason as a guide for human action. As pointed out in the last two chapters, the totally reasonable nature of man was assumed by the bourgeois liberals and repudiated by the welfare liberals. Here some careful distinctions must be made. Cohen agreed with the contemporary idea that man is not always reasonable. In this way, he differed from the bourgeois liberals. But he was also quick to attack those "moderns" who wanted to relegate reason to the ash heap of history. In a review of James Harvey Robinson's The Mind in the Making,[30] Cohen clearly demonstrated that he did not share the distrust of reason displayed by many contemporary liberals:

> ...the discovery that the flowers of human life have their roots in the dark soil does not in any way deny the value and importance of sunlight. We seem to be living in a time when the worship of the Olympian gods of the air, the sky, and the sunlight is being replaced by the worship of underground deities. But it is well to remember that it has always been of the very essence of liberal civilization that the organic or basic motives of man should be regulated and controlled by the light of reason.[31]

That is, even though the old liberalism came to grief because its conception of human reason was too simplistic, we should not hasten to discard the whole tradition of rationalism. As a logician, Cohen made reason central to his concept of life. He had a deep sense of continuity with the past. He did not live in an imagined fifth century polis, but neither did he dismiss everything from the past because it was not "scientific." Reason existed in the ancient world, just as it does in the modern world, and Cohen constantly stressed the continuity and value of the rationalistic tradition. One of Cohen's

strangest and least known books is entitled A Source Book in Greek Science,[32] on which he collaborated with the classicist I. E. Drabkin. This book is a kind of encyclopedia of Hellenic accomplishments in both practical and theoretical science. Cohen contended that one of the myths about the history of science which seems to persist despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary is that the Greeks were all "deductive" and modern scientists are all "inductive." A Source Book in Greek Science was written to demonstrate that in Greek science, as in modern science, there is a combination of reason and empiricism. Reason, according to Cohen, must always remain central to man's attempts to make sense out of the facts which a confusing world presents. The notion that somehow one must choose between reason and "facts" is, again according to Cohen, wholly a chimera that has done a great deal of mischief. Science needs both. The Greeks understood the value of reason, but they also understood the value of collecting and collating facts, and carrying on empirical research. Modern man, on the other hand, sometimes seems to forget how vitally important reason is in his haste to "get the facts." Actually, Cohen was not overly concerned about working scientists disregarding reason, even though they might state publicly that all they do is gather facts. He was fond of quoting his friend Einstein in this regard: "If you want to find out anything from the theoretical physicists about the methods they use--don't listen to their words, fix your attention on their deeds."[33] If we fix our attention upon the

deeds of scientists, we will discover that they actually do use traditional reason, even though they sometimes do not recognize it as such. Without reason, however, it is virtually impossible to make our hypotheses explicit, and it is all too easy to get lost in a maze of unexamined premises. Fortunately, working scientists do not make this error--most of the time. Cohen even went so far as to suggest that all science tends to become more and more deductive as it develops.[34]

In Reason and Nature Cohen outlined various "Rivals and Substitutes for Reason."[35] The main ones are: 1) authority, such as the Church, or tradition, or expert opinion; 2) pure experience, as advanced by Mach, James, and Dewey; 3) intuition, by which Cohen meant such things as "common sense;" 4) undisciplined imagination. None of these, Cohen contended, can be an adequate substitute for reason, because, left to itself, any one of them ultimately leads to chaos. Only reason can help us make sense out of our commonplace observations (the sun obviously rises and sets, does it not?). Cohen also contended that reason is not natural to man, in the way the bourgeois liberals assumed. It must be learned, just like everything else. In this Cohen clearly dissents from the idea of natural man as a Benthamite calculating machine. In point of fact, people do not always act reasonably. Most people, most of the time, opt for one of the rivals or substitutes for reason, and much of the misery in human life results from this very fact. All of these rivals and

substitutes have their place, but they must, according to Cohen, be apprehended within a context of reason:

> ...we have not dismissed these rivals and substitutes as mere usurpers. Neither authority nor experience, neither intuition nor imagination, can ever be completely ruled out in favour of pure reason (if the latter is identified with logical inference). All of these play significant roles in our effort to apprehend the nature of things; but their fruitfulness depends, in brief, upon the extent to which they submit to the rule of reason. Neither brute authority nor the immediacy of experience, neither mystic intuition nor unreasoned imagery, forms a sufficient basis for an adequate human philosophy. Always we need a rational apprehension of the significance of things in their relational or intelligible contexts.[36]

In short, an adequate human philosophy must include both reason and nature. Neither can be reduced to the other, and this brings us to the principle of polarity, which is as important to Cohen's liberalism as it is to his metaphysic.

The principle of polarity, it must be remembered, was the overall, unifying device to which Cohen's adherence to logic and the scientific method led him. It is not really difficult to grasp, but is sometimes rather elusive in practice. When it is stated in simple, general terms, it appears to be quite easy to understand:

> ...the principle of polarity...means...that opposites such as immediacy and mediation, unity and plurality, the fixed and the flux, substance and function, ideal and real, actual and possible, etc., like the north (positive) and south (negative) poles of a magnet, all involve each other when applied to any significant entity.[37]

This is all very well, but in practice, i.e., in the everyday comings and goings of real men and women, human beings tend to be a great

deal more reductionist than Cohen's principle of polarity will allow. Cohen would probably have responded to this statement by saying that, while it is indubitably true, it only indicates the tragic depth of human fanaticism, and in no way affects the validity of the principle of polarity. So be it. This is not the place to discuss the ultimate worth of Cohen's metaphysic. Instead, we shall attempt to show how Cohen applied the principle to the human condition. Cohen said:

> The efforts of the human intellect may be viewed as a tension between two poles--one to do justice to the fullness of the concrete case before us, the other to grasp and underlying abstract universal principle that controls much more than the one case before us.[38]

Similarly, the principle of polarity applies to historical problems. Cohen contended that too much history is actually a kind of "historicism" that sees everything in terms of the "dogma of determinism."[39] This will not do, however, for

> ...if everything which <u>is</u> today is completely determined by its past, there can be really nothing new today. And if there be nothing new today, neither was there anything new yesterday, and history is lost in rational mechanics.[40]

The viciousness of determinism can be avoided, however, by applying the principle of polarity:

> The denial, on the part of historicism, that there may be any order of values independent of historical sequences, is ultimately based on the nominalistic dogma that only particular entities in time and space are real. But values, like mathematical relations, may involve characteristics independent of the time order. This independence does not, of course, deny their intimate union in our common life, but it warns us against straining the principle of parsimony by trying to sew the vesture of the universe out of a single piece of cloth, or trying to weave that cloth without having the threads cross

> each other. Value and historical existence are independent of each other in the same sense that the two blades which form a pair of scissors are independent of each other. Both are necessary and intimately connected, but neither can absorb, or, by a process of sublimation (Aufhebung), transcend each other.[41]

The principle of polarity also applies in law. Both legal positivists, like Langdell and his followers,[42] and all manner of legal "Hegelians"--i.e., all those who believe in some sort of "natural law", but particularly the natural law advocates in France, Belgium, Germany, and Italy during the first three decades of the twentieth century[43]--are wrong. The positivists err because they deny the existence of ideals, while the "Hegelians" err by denying the existence of the particular:

> Universality and individuality, justice, and the law, the ideal and the actual, are inseparable, yet never completely identifiable. Like being and becoming, unity and plurality, rest and motion, they are polar categories. Deny one and the other becomes meaningless. Yet the two must always remain opposed. Theoretically, the legal system may be viewed completely from either pole. You may insist that there is little difference between...positivism...which allows for moral judgments upon the law and an idealism that admits the inherent limitation of any ideal of justice that can be applied to human affairs. There is a sense in which the same system of legal rights and duties might be expressed in positivistic or idealistic language. But not only is language itself a most important factor in human affairs--since all sorts of emotional differences arise from differences of expression--but so long as our knowledge remains incomplete it makes a difference from which end we view the legal system. The positivistic and the idealistic perspective cannot be identical on the level of human knowledge. Positivists fail in trying to separate law from all ideals, and Hegelians fail in trying to identify the ideal with some form of the actual, whether the Prussian or any other state.[44]

Finally, the principle of polarity applies in ethics:

> Against the claim that there can be no moral rules because no two situations are absolutely alike, we may urge that there could be no sort of intelligence as to life, no tact, intuition, or empirical wisdom of any sort, if there were nothing about any situation applicable to another. No two physical situations are ever absolutely identical. Yet this does not preclude the possibility of abstract physical laws that give us control over nature undreamed of by other means. In action as in science, not all that exists is relevant; and neither the fullness of life nor the fullness of knowledge can be attained without scientific organization which ignores or eliminates the irrelevant. What is chaos but a universe in which there is no order or law ruling out certain possibilities? The raving maniac's mind, in which a piece of bread can become a burning volcano, or the ceiling a herd of elephants, points toward, though it falls short of, the absolute chaos in which all things are possible and anything may become anything else.[45]

There were many outcomes of Cohen's application of the principle of polarity to political problems. In fact, it is this single, unifying principle which lies behind virtually all of the liberal positions which he adopted. Cohen once said that the essence of liberalism was a belief in the possibility--not the inevitability--of human progress, coupled to a belief in the doctrine of toleration.[46] The choice of the term "progress" was perhaps unfortunate, for it can lead to the hasty conclusion that Cohen was just another Pollyanna beating the drum for the popular idea of Spencer-Sumner moral uplift through inevitable evolution. This is very far from the truth, however. Cohen stressed the idea of the <u>possibility</u> of human progress. He saw that some sort of advance had been made in science by applying a judicial combination of rationalism and empiricism, and he believed

that possibly--just possibly--the same thing might happen in the larger human society if liberalism persisted. In the past, liberalism grew up as a result of various responses to specific situations. People favored progress in a certain area without really knowing or caring that they believed in the abstract notion of progress. Early Protestants reacted to the Church Universal and developed the doctrine of individual salvation without the necessary mediation of Church authorities. This, of course, completely undermined the earthly authority of the Church and ultimately contributed a great deal to human freedom. But certain elements in Protestantism--notably in Calvinism--retained the old idea that "human nature is profoundly and radically sinful and corrupt."[47] This retention of the ancient doctrine of original sin did not bode well for the future of liberalism. It led to all sorts of blue laws, authorities, magistrates, and general regulation of life by government. The life of seventeenth century Massachusetts is most illustrative of this. But, according to Cohen, the "believers in progress" eventually rejected this idea, saying, instead, that nature is not sin:

> ...human flesh is not originally corrupt. To be sure, man commits sins and crimes. You cannot deny that. But that is due to the bad institutions under which we live. If you could only wipe out the evil institutions under which man has lived, human nature would assert itself.[48]

Thus armed with trust rather than fear of human nature, Condorcet could await the guillotine in a Paris garret and still write an exquisite paean to the notion of human progress. Cohen, like most liberals,

finds the Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des progres de l'spirit humain a greatly enobling document which beautifully expresses the liberal faith in progress, even though it might have been a bit too sanguine. At any rate, the possibility and desirability of human progress is central to Cohen's liberalism.

As mentioned earlier, a belief in toleration is the other polestar in Cohen's liberal faith:

> The touchstone that enables us to recognize liberalism is the question of toleration. Do you believe in prohibiting the expression of opinions that are contrary to what you hold to be the truth in politics, morals, and religion? If you do, then admirable as you may otherwise be, you are not of the true liberal faith.[49]

Toleration was a necessary inference from the principle of polarity and scientific method. Science often proceeds by positing new hypotheses that run counter to the old way of viewing things. If there is a supreme authority of some sort that allows only certain scientific hypotheses to be advanced, there can be no progress in science. The case of Galileo is a good illustration of this thesis. Brute authority can never have all the answers, so there must be toleration of dissenting views. This is the essence of science, and liberalism in general. Thus Cohen was constrained to oppose all forms of censorship.

There is a great practical difficulty with the idea of toleration. Simply put, it is this:

> How can a government allow poisonous and subversive errors or immoral opinions to spread without thereby being derelict

> in its duty to protect and preserve the community? How can the state maintain its sovereignty without supressing views hostile to its continued existence?... How can you have a definite conviction and yet find ground to tolerate views that contradict it?[50]

Spinoza attempted to solve this problem by pointing to the "distinction between demonstrated knowledge of necessary relations and ordinary beliefs as to existential issues on which we are only subjectively certain."[51] In other words, government must somehow be made to recognize its inherent limitations. Certainly government has a right--in fact, a duty--to maintain public order, but it must always fall back on the distinction between those actions which can be clearly demonstrated as harmful and those which only seem threatening, or perverse, or simply wrong. It may be that this central problem of liberalism will never be satisfactorily solved for all time. Up to the time of this writing--summer, 1971--it seems that the general tendency in the United States is to opt for toleration of all sorts of heretical views, and even of actions that border on treason. There are exceptions, of course--e.g., the Alien and Sedition Acts, Attorney General Palmer's "raids" after World War I, Senator Joseph McCarthy's attacks upon legitimate dissent, the ongoing activities of Congressional investigations into subversive activities, and so on. Nevertheless, the general tendency in the United States is one of rather remarkable toleration. The recent Supreme Court decision in the case of the purloined Pentagon papers[52] demonstrates once again that at least the High Court is

extremely tolerant of behavior that goes far beyond that allowed by many governments. This may not remain true in the indefinite future. There are powerful forces at work today--as there always are--which would squelch all sorts of dissent if given the chance. Up to this point in time, however, the general tendency in the United States is one of great toleration.

Cohen recognized all the difficulties involved in toleration, and he offered no final solution to this exceedingly complex problem. Instead, he merely pointed out that in a liberal society, there is always some risk, never perfect security:

> The liberal views life as an adventure in which we must take risks in new situations, but in which there is no guaranty that the new will always be the good or the true. Like science, liberalism insists on a critical examination of the content of all our beliefs, principles, or initial hypotheses and on subjecting them to a continuous process of verification so that they will be progressively better founded in experience and reason.[53]

Thus liberalism leads to a wise resignation in the face of "...the pathetic frailty of the knowledge or beliefs on which our life depends."[54] The principle of polarity demands an "open eye for possible alternatives, each to receive the same logical treatment.... This open eye for possible alternatives...is the essence of liberalism in art, morals, and politics."[55]

Reason, scientific method, and the principle of polarity led Cohen to assert a faith in progress, and a profound belief in the necessity of toleration. But he hedged these liberal ideas about with

a tragic awareness that the way of liberalism involves a component of risk that not all human beings are willing to take. There is, in other words, a deep sense of humility in Cohen's liberal faith, a certain tone that borders on melancholy. He hopes that society can continue to build upon the liberal faith, but he is also tragically aware that reason and scientific method may not be sufficiently powerful weapons to do battle with the ignorance and blind passion which make up so much of human life.

Obviously, it would be too cumbersome to discuss in detail every application Cohen made of these basic principles to specific issues. To do so would necessitate a duplication of virtually everything he wrote in thirteen books and more than 250 articles. In fact, Cohen almost never addressed himself to very specific, temporal problems, as, say, whether a particular law should or should not be passed. Instead, he always attempted to go to the roots of situations and deal with large problem areas instead of specific economic or political problems. This makes him extremely difficult to deal with. In general, as pointed out earlier, Cohen favored most of the programs advanced by liberals in the first three decades of the twentieth century. However, he was very reluctant to get too embroiled in any political dispute. Nevertheless, this chapter concludes by exploring a pair of problem areas which reveal, at least in part, approximately where Cohen stood on some of the issues of his day. Let it be emphasized again, however, that these are

problem areas. Accordingly, they do not deal with issues in a concrete sense. They are of central importance to Cohen's overall position as a critical philosopher who favored the general-welfare state over the old individualistic liberalism of the bourgeois liberals. Hence they display Cohen's brand of liberalism as clearly as anything he ever wrote. The first case to be examined is Cohen's attitude toward the old idea of individualism; the second is his attitude toward private property.

In 1932, Cohen published an essay entitled "The Intellectual Basis of Individualism."[56] The article begins with a summary of the historical basis of the idea of individualism. It was, according to Cohen, produced by three great intellectual movements: 1) the Reformation; 2) modern philosophy, i.e., philosophy since Descartes; 3) modern economic theory, i.e., most of the economic thinking in bourgeois liberalism.

Cohen points out that while many of the leaders in Protestant communities did not, themselves, favor personal freedom--witness Calvin's Geneva--the outcome of the Protestant Reformation was to "enhance the value of the individual and to give him independent status."[58] This, in turn, came about because:

> The church is conceived as the body of the faithful, the individual believers, rather than the hierarchy. Each individual soul comes into contact with God directly through faith. And this conception of the dignity of the individual soul continues throughout modern literature as well as theological and political thought.[59]

Cohen goes on to show that the extreme individualism which grows out of the emphasis placed upon the individual in Protestantism is actually in error because it has neglected other theological doctrines. For example, he states, few of those who argue for extreme individualism are willing to go as far as Cain in saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" and "...good Protestant theology is still expressed in Saint Paul's maxim, 'We are all members of each others' bodies.' "[60] In other words, although Protestantism has been one of the most powerful forces to lay stress upon the value of the individual, it has perhaps gone too far in this regard and has forgotten other equally important theological arguments that support some sort of collectivism.

There is a similar occurrence in modern philosophy. Philosophy since Descartes, according to Cohen, has been "predominently subjectivistic."[61] Subjectivism carried to its most extreme says, "Lo! This whole physical world is only your private idea and possession. It all exists in your mind."[62] Cohen admits that to state the whole of modern philosophy in terms as solipsistic as this is a "caricature,"[63] but he then goes on to say that "the essence of Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel, and Schopenauer, as well as of Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Mill [is] to believe that individual human consciousness is the ultimate reality."[64] The outcome of all this--although not stated by any of these philosophers in such completely solipsistic terms--was to emphasize the absolute rights of the

individual human being, as was pointed out in Chapter IV. Eventually, metaphysics was aided by science in the form of evolutionary doctrines and the whole elaborate structure of nineteenth century laissez faire resulted. Against the pressure of this philosophical tradition, Cohen asserted "the logic of actual events and the awakening of a critical scientific attitude."[65] The history of actual events does not show universal progress toward a great new society. The doctrine of "free contract" between individual workingmen and great corporations, for example, served only to enslave men, women, and children in a hideous system from which the only escape was death--despite the fact that it squared with the idea of universal progress through absolute freedom of the individual. Here is a good example of Cohen's use of scientific method and the principle of polarity: the apparent law--which is nothing more than a hypothesis--that men should be regarded, completely, as individual entities, must be tested against the "facts" of existence. If the hypothesis is found wanting--and to Cohen it was--then scientific method demands that it be adjusted. The principle of polarity forces us to keep an eye open to other possibilities. Thus the doctrine of radical individualism must be opposed by the notion of collectivism.

Cohen's argument against bourgeois economic theory is essentially the same as that advanced by the various critics of bourgeois liberalism discussed in Chapter VI. In a rather lengthy treatment, he reaches three conclusions: 1) "The assumption that private

profit leads to maximum productivity is not in accord with the facts"; 2) material productivity itself is not always good, particularly when the human cost is weighed; 3) human energies are not, in fact, totally dominated by the drive for profit.

Cohen's overall solution to the problem of individualism vs. collectivism is, simply, to apply the principle of polarity in such a way that it becomes obvious to any rational creature that both are necessary for any sort of human happiness. Just as a brute individualism can beat down great masses of human beings into helpless atoms, so can a brute collectivism deprive men of their sacred differentness. Both individualism and collectivism are hypotheses; they supplement each other and should not be looked upon as warring credos:

> Collectivism and individualism have been fighting faiths. Men have rallied behind them and have treated them as dogmas to be defended in their integrity for all times and places. A true philosophic or scientific attitude would look at these principles not as dogmas, but as working hypotheses. Life is a problem like painting a picture, rather than adding a sum of figures already put down. Our principles then are to be tried. We must have principles in order to have programs and to follow a given direction rather than get lost and wander aimlessly; but we must not follow a principle to destruction--that is the essence of fanaticism. The enlightened attitude in harmony with modern philosophy and science is to adopt one hypothesis and watch the facts of life to see whether they confirm our hypothesis. This experimental attitude toward life is helped by the realization that the hypothesis that guides us is not the only one, that there are alternative hypotheses possible which may have to be invoked when our principle is found to break down.
>
> Theoretically, the two principles of collectivism and individualism supplement each other, and theoretically we may get at the same result by starting at individualism and

> making the proper correction in the interests of collectivism, or by starting with collectivism and making the necessary corrections for individualism. But in the practical realm, since we never complete our theoretic system, it makes a tremendously important difference from which end we start. Also, the emphasis as well as the individual notes makes the song. And so, for practical reasons, I think we must nowadays start with the collectivistic principle.[66]

Seeing the individualistic-collectivistic problem in this light led Cohen to support such things as fair wage and hours laws, labor unions, compulsory accident insurance paid for by employers, welfare spending, civil rights for black people, and most of the programs of the New Deal. Again, however, it is important to point out that Cohen's support of governmental involvement in men's private affairs resulted from his philosophic analysis, and not from simple sentimentalism. It is also important to stress once again that while he lent his support to such programs as those listed above, he did so in a very quiet and unobtrusive manner: he was not a hot-eyed reformer convinced that the world would be immediately transformed if only some specific reform were enacted. As stressed over and over in this dissertation, Cohen was a theoretical philosopher and only very rarely stepped into the public arena.

Cohen's attitude toward private property, which leads to a conclusion similar to his analysis of individualism, was expressed in a number of essays. "Property and Soverignty," which was published in the Cornell Law Quarterly in 1927,[67] is probably the best example, but he also touched upon this subject in "Social

Capitalism,"[68] "The Basis of Contract,"[69] and a number of reviews of other peoples' books published in the New Republic and elsewhere during the 1920's and 1930's.[70]

Cohen took a decidedly unusual view in discussing property and property rights. Although he recognized that "Property and sovereignty, as every student knows, belong to entirely different branches of the law,"[71] he came to the remarkable conclusion that the legal system which confers property rights upon an individual also gives him "imperium over our fellow human beings."[72] The argument that leads to this conclusion is rather complex, but essentially it revolves around the notion that the granting of property rights to certain individuals confers on them powers of dominion over others because the others desperately need the things produced by property:

> The character of property as sovereign power compelling service and obedience may be obscured for us in a commercial economy by the fiction of the so-called labour contract as a free bargain and by the frequency with which service is rendered indirectly through a money payment. But not only is there actually little freedom to bargain on the part of the steel-worker or miner who needs a job, but in some cases the medieval subject had as much power to bargain when he accepted the sovereignty of his lord. Today I do not directly serve my landlord if I wish to live in the city with a roof over my head, but I must work for others to pay him rent with which he obtains the personal services of others. The money needed for purchasing things must for the vast majority be acquired by hard labour and disagreeable service to those to whom the law has accorded dominion over the things necessary for subsistence.[73]

The key here is the idea of "the fiction of the so-called labour contract." To Cohen, it was abundantly clear that the vast majority of laborers were not "free" to make labor contracts with gigantic corporations. He, along with a great many other advocates of welfare liberalism in the early decades of the twentieth century, hotly disputed this interpretation of the fourteenth amendment. When judges trotted out the fourteenth amendment to find unconstitutional a whole series of state laws aimed at ameliorating the sad state of working men, Cohen contended they were actually making laws, not interpreting them. The judges, of course, contended otherwise, insisting instead that they were merely "playing back" eternal principles of law. This Cohen called the "phonograph theory of the law" and attempted to show that it was all a lot of nonsense. The whole idea of the labor contract, for example, Cohen cited as an instance of judge-made law which simply served to maintain the power of property owners over propertyless workers.

Cohen attacked the property rights of large property owners on several grounds. First there was the "occupation theory," which held that "private property was based on the assumed right of the original discoverer and occupant to dispose of that which thus became his."[75] Cohen contended that this argument was fallacious because "Few accumulations of great wealth were ever simply founded. Rather were they acquired by the labour of many, by conquest, by business manipulation and by other means. It is obvious that today

at any rate few economic goods can be acquired by discovery and first occupancy."[76] In other words, Cohen contended that the occupation theory as a defense of private property was largely fraudulent because it did not take into account the actual facts of how a given individual came to possess his property.

Secondly, there is the "labour theory" which holds "that every one is entitled to the full produce of his own labour."[77] This too is a fraudulent claim--according to Cohen--because "economic goods are never the result of any one man's unaided labour."[78] It is impossible to determine whose labor is responsible for the production of anything in a sophisticated, complex society. Nevertheless, the law confers property rights on certain individuals and excludes others. And this, Cohen contends, is unjust. The influence of Marx and the labor theory of value is very clear in this analysis.

There is also a metaphysical argument which attempts to justify the holding of large amounts of private property. Hegel and other idealists:

> ...have tried to deduce the right of property from the individual's right to act as a free personality. To be free one must have a sphere of self-assertion in the external world. One's private property provides such an opportunity.[79]

Cohen objects to this argument also, because it is too vague concerning the categories of both personality and property. Cohen agrees that individuals must have absolute dominion over such

personal articles as toothbrushes. But it is absurd to carry this argument too far, for we must remember:

> ...that the major effect of property in land, in the machinery of production, in capital goods, etc., is to enable the owner to exclude others from their necessities, and thus to compel them to serve him....the primary effect of property on a large scale is to limit freedom, since the one thing that private property law does not do is to guarantee a minimum of subsistence or the necessary tools of freedom to every one. So far as a regime of private property fails to do the latter it rather compels people to part with their freedom.[80]

In other words, extending private property rights beyond the personal results in the destruction of that very principle which was initially defended by private property doctrine, viz., human freedom. Cohen contends that this kind of thinking is a variety of "monistic mania." It can be corrected by applying the principle of polarity. That is, there should be private ownership of some things, but not of others. Private ownership of a toothbrush enhances the total of human freedom. Private ownership of a railroad retards human freedom, because it gives dominion over the lives of others to the man or men who own the railroad. The problem with this analysis, of course, is to determine exactly where to draw the line between the public and the private sectors. Characteristically, Cohen does not tell us where this line should be drawn. He would no doubt say that this is an improper point to raise, however, for good scientific method demands that any hypothesis be tested by the facts of a given case. Thus each instance of private vs. public must be examined on its own merits,

and not forced to submit to some preconceived notion of how things should be.

Finally, Cohen attacks what he calls the economic theory of private property. This is nothing more than the old idea out of bourgeois liberalism which holds that productivity is maximized in a private-property economy. Cohen attempts to refute this idea by showing that quite often private ownership has actually impeded productivity--by buying up patents for improved processes, for example, and continuing production under the old way. Secondly, he shows that public, rather than private, works have often increased productivity in ways that are beyond the power of the private sector. Examples of this would be irrigation projects in the Southwest and regional projects like TVA. Finally, Cohen asserts that the economic argument is fallacious because it is conceived too narrowly, i.e., it sees things in terms of short-range monetary gains only and disregards long-range effects upon a nation's resources and upon human beings. There are social interests, in other words, that are too frequently neglected for short-term profit in a private economy.

Obviously, Cohen's economic views would have to be classified as some species of socialism, but, as pointed out earlier, his was a benign and non-revolutionary sort of socialism. When pressed, he would agree that most large industries should be nationalized, and long-range social planning should replace indiscriminate and wasteful growth. However, he was as quick to condemn the illiberal

tendencies of international communism as he was those of capitalism.[81] Cohen consistently fell back on his principle of polarity: the evils of individualism and capitalism could be tempered with collectivism; but collectivism itself can become an evil if men forget the individual human being. In the final analysis, it would have to be admitted that this is the essence of Morris Cohen's liberal faith.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1. Morris R. Cohen, The Faith of a Liberal (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970). First issued in 1946.

2. Morris R. Cohen, "Kant's Doctrine of the Summum Bonum," Philosophical Review, 18 (1909), pp. 179-180.

3. Morris R. Cohen, "Conception of Philosophy in Recent Discussion," Journal of Philosophy, 10 (1910), pp. 401-410. Reprinted in Morris R. Cohen, Studies in Philosophy and Science (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1949).

4. See Martin A. Kuhn, Morris Raphael Cohen: A Bibliography, Journal of the History of Ideas, Special Supplement (1957), for a nearly complete listing of works by and about Morris R. Cohen.

5. Volume I of the New Republic was issued in 1914.

6. See Kuhn, Morris Raphael Cohen: A Bibliography, for a complete list of the New Republic articles.

7. Morris R. Cohen, "The Bill of Rights Theory," New Republic, unsigned editorial, 2 (1915), pp. 236-237. Reprinted in Morris R. Cohen, Law and the Social Order (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1933), pp. 148-156.

8. Ibid., 148.

9. Ibid., 148.

10. Ibid., 149.

11. Ibid., 149.

12. Ibid., 149.

13. Ibid., 149-150.

14. Ibid., 154.

15. See, for example, Morris R. Cohen, "The Process of Judicial Legislation," American Law Review, vol. XLVIII (1914), p. 161; "Property and Sovereignty," Cornell Law Quarterly, vol. XIII (1927), p. 8 and "The Basis of Contract," Harvard Law Review, February 1933. All three essays are reprinted in Cohen, Law and the Social Order.

16. Morris R. Cohen, "Sacco and Vanzetti Compared with Dreyfus," The Sacco-Vanzetti Dawn, I, No. 1 (192?), p. 3. The Sacco-Vanzetti Dawn passed almost instantly into twilight and obscurity. Only one issue was published. A rare copy is located at the Columbia University Library.

17. Morris R. Cohen, "Comment on Sacco-Vanzetti," Lantern, 2 (#3, 1929), p. 5.

18. Morris R. Cohen, "Minimizing Social Conflicts," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 203 (May 1939), p. 114. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal.

19. Ibid.

20. Morris R. Cohen, "The Dark Side of Religion," in Religion Today, A Challenging Enigma, ed. by Arthur L. Swift, Jr. (New York: Whittlesey House, 1933), pp. 75-105. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal.

21. Morris R. Cohen, "A Scandalous Denial of Justice: The Bertrand Russell Case," in John Dewey and Horace M. Kelley, eds., The Bertrand Russell Case (New York: The Viking Press, 1941), pp. 131-147. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal. Interestingly, this celebrated case resulted from a New York judge's refusal to allow Russell to occupy the chair of philosophy vacated by Cohen himself upon his retirement from CCNY. See Morris R. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1944), p. 150. See also, Bertrand Russell, Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), pp. 207-259.

22. Morris R. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 150.

23. Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher: Morris R. Cohen in Life and Letters (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), p. 172.

24. Cohen, "What I Believe," Faith of a Liberal, p. 10.

25. Morris R. Cohen, "A Slacker's Apology," New Republic (Dec. 3, 1919), p. 19. Reprinted under the title "Philosophy in Wartime--An Apology" in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal, pp. 84-88.

26. Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, ed. by Edwin Cannan (New York: Random House, 1937), p. 3.

27. Cohen, "Philosophy in Wartime," p. 25.

28. Ibid., 85.

29. Ibid., 88.

30. James Harvey Robinson, The Mind in the Making (New York: McMillan, 1921).

31. Morris R. Cohen, "Liberalism and Irrationalism," New Republic (May 17, 1922). Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal, p. 71.

32. Morris R. Cohen and Israel E. Drabkin, A Source Book in Greek Science (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948).

33. Albert Einstein, The World as I See It, p. 30. Quoted in Morris R. Cohen, "Einstein and His World," Menorah Journal, Spring, 1936, p. 107. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal.

34. For a fuller discussion of the deductive nature of scientific inquiry, refer to Chapter III of this dissertation. See also, Morris R. Cohen, Reason and Nature (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1931); passim, but particularly pp. 115-125.

35. Cohen, Reason and Nature, Ch. II.

36. Ibid., 75.

37. Ibid., 165.

38. Ibid., 368.

39. Ibid., 385.

40. Ibid., 385.

41. Ibid., 385.

42. Morris R. Cohen, American Thought (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 189-192.

43. Cohen, Reason and Nature, p. 401. See also, Morris R. Cohen, "Jus Naturale Redivivium," Philosophical Review, vol. XXV (1916), p. 761; and Morris R. Cohen, "Positivism and the Limits of Idealism in the Law," Columbia Law Review, vol. XXVII (1927), p. 238.

44. Ibid., 426.

45. Ibid., 437.

46. Cohen, "The Future of American Liberalism," Faith of a Liberal, p. 449.

47. Ibid., 449.

48. Ibid., 449-450.

49. Cohen, "What I Believe," Faith of a Liberal, p. 14.

50. Ibid., 14-15.

51. Ibid., 15.

52. Detroit News, July 1, 1971. Special Supplement on U. S. v. New York Times. Not published in L. Wk. at the time of this writing, hence no legal citation available.

53. Cohen, "What I Believe," Faith of a Liberal, p. 8.

54. Ibid., 8.

55. Ibid., 8.

56. Morris R. Cohen, "The Intellectual Basis of Individualism," League for Industrial Democracy Monthly, vol. 10, no. 6 (March, 1932), p. 3. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal, pp. 59-67.

57. Ibid., 59.

58. Ibid., 60.

59. Ibid., 59.

60. Ibid., 60.

61. Ibid., 60.

62. Ibid., 60.

63. Ibid., 60.

64. Ibid., 60.

65. Ibid., 61.

66. Ibid., 66-67.

67. Morris R. Cohen, "Property and Sovereignty," Cornell Law Quarterly, 13 (1927), pp. 8-30. Reprinted in Cohen, Law and the Social Order.

68. Morris R. Cohen, "Social Capitalism," in Bureau of Personnel Administration, New York, Economic and Social Planning, 1932, pp. 158-168.

69. Morris R. Cohen, "The Basis of Contract," Harvard Law Review, 46 (1933), pp. 553-592. Reprinted in Cohen, Law and the Social Order.

70. See, for example, Morris R. Cohen, review of Herbert Hoover, American Individualism, New Republic, 33 (1923), pp. 352-353. Reprinted in Morris R. Cohen, Reason and Law: Studies in Truistic Philosophy (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950); and Morris R. Cohen, review of Mr. Justice Brandeis, ed. by Felix Frankfurter, Harvard Law Review, 47 (1933), pp. 165-170. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal.

71. Cohen, "Property and Sovereignty," in Cohen, Law and the Social Order, p. 41.

72. Ibid., 46-47.

73. Ibid., 46.

74. Morris R. Cohen, "The Process of Judicial Legislation," American Law Review, vol. XLVIII (1914), p. 161. Reprinted in Cohen, Law and the Social Order, pp. 112-147.

75. Cohen, "Property and Sovereignty," in Cohen, Law and the Social Order, p. 49.

76. Ibid., 49.

77. Ibid., 51.

78. Ibid., 51.

79. Ibid., 53.

80. Ibid., 54.

81. Morris R. Cohen, "Why I Am Not a Communist," Modern Monthly, 8 (1934), pp. 138-142. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal.

# CHAPTER VIII

## AMOR DEI INTELLECTUALIS

When Morris Cohen came to the United States in 1892, he was a conventionally pious young man. His early schooling had been exclusively in an old world cheder, and he was a devout believer in the traditions of Jewish orthodoxy. Two years before coming to America, he wrote a letter to his father declaring that he feared the irreligious surroundings he might find in this strange new land, and begged to be allowed to continue his studies and life of piety in Russia.[1] This was not to be, however, for the harsh facts of economic life prevailed and the Cohen family was forced to re-assemble in the New World.

It was not long before Morris Cohen's fears concerning the irreligious atmosphere of America were borne out. As pointed out earlier, certain doubts had already been planted in Cohen's mind by various meskalim, and, although he observed all the proper rituals with seeming enthusiasm, a certain skepticism lurked in the background of his religious ruminations. At his father's request, Cohen continued to attend religious services until 1899,[2] although he abandoned his belief in the efficacy of religious orthodoxy long before that date.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct the exact path taken by an individual in something as personal as religion.

Some things stand out in Cohen's life, however, that seem to indicate, at least in part, why he abandoned the old way. In the first instance, there was very little opportunity to continue Hebraic and Talmudic studies in the United States; certainly this must have been a factor in luring Cohen away from Orthodoxy. Apparently, Cohen possessed an innately skeptical mind, and this too must have been a factor. Much of his early reading in this country was in socialist newspapers like Die Arbeiter Zeitung which often contained articles that were very hostile to any sort of religious ritual, seeing all the world's religions, instead, as nothing more than institutions which served to direct people's attention away from the causes of their plight in this world.

In addition to these factors, Cohen seems to have experienced what can only be called a "negative conversion." One day in the autumn of 1892, Cohen overheard a conversation between his father and a Mr. Tunick, an old family friend from Neshwies days. Mr. Tunick was a militant atheist of the sort which abounded on the Lower East Side of New York around the turn of the century. He challenged Abraham Cohen to "prove" two things: first, that there was a personal God who was capable of being influenced by either the prayers or the deeds of human beings, and secondly that there was any evidence whatsoever which demonstrated that the Jewish faith was any truer than any other faith. To these challenges--which obviously go right to the heart of Jewish orthodoxy--Cohen's father could reply only, "I am a believer."[3] To most people this encounter between a

militant atheist and a true believer would have had little meaning. To Cohen, however, the encounter was fraught with significance. His father's failure to counter logical argument with anything more substantial than the simple reiteration of his profound faith was completely unsatisfying. Cohen quickly came to the conclusion that there was absolutely no evidence for believing in the supernatural, a fact that was only confirmed by his later studies. Once this was established, he could see no reason for continuing with prayer and Jewish rituals based upon supernatural beliefs. All this apparently happened rather quickly, which justifies the use of the phrase "negative conversion" to describe Cohen's mental processes at this time. Cohen attempted to argue these points with his father, but to no avail. Abraham Cohen insisted that as long as his children remained in his house, they would continue to observe all orthodox rituals. Cohen conformed to his father's demands until 1899 when he found himself in a position either to leave home or to cease orthodox practices. In order to keep him in the family, Cohen's father allowed him to chart his own course in religion. Thus Cohen was able to escape from the unhappy position of being a hypocrite going through the motions of religious observance without any true belief. This had been intolerable for a person with as finely a developed sense of ethics as Cohen had. In later years, he made no attempt to hide his scorn for those who ostentatiously attend religious services every sabbath, but who have no genuine religious conviction. No doubt, this was a holdover

from the guilt he experienced when forced to do the same thing as a sensitive adolescent.[4]

Once Cohen established an independent existence, he never again attended religious services or made any gesture toward orthodox belief.[5] It is important to note, however, that he did not become a militant agnostic of the Robert Ingersoll type, prosletyzing as vehemently as any missionary for his own brand of "faith." Cohen is best characterized by the term passive agnostic. He was a naturalist in philosophy who demanded rigorous, logical proof of any proposition, religious or otherwise, and this ruled out virtually all conventional religious beliefs. There simply was no such proof available concerning the existence of Yaweh, Allah, God Almighty, or any other member of the world's crowded pantheon, so Cohen was perfectly content to let the matter rest. In this way, Cohen followed Bertrand Russell, as he did in so many other matters. Russell suggested that man should simply "suspend" judgment about certain questions until such time as he has tools and techniques to ask them in a sensible fashion.[6] Nevertheless, when asked, Cohen was decidedly outspoken in arguing against what he considered to be the philosophical inadequacies and positive social evils of conventional religion. This aspect of Cohen's work is revealed in a number of essays scattered throughout his work, but especially in one entitled "The Dark Side of Religion" which originally appeared in a symposium volume that presented a number of popular religious views.[7]

In "The Dark Side of Religion" Cohen falls back on his standard critical technique, i.e., rather than directly advancing his own ideas, he lets them emerge by criticizing the conclusions of others regarding the subject. In other words, he plays the role of the advocatus diaboli in this volume--a role which he dearly loved. But Cohen does a great deal more than argue against the canonization of a particular saint, the task of the advocatus diaboli in the Roman Catholic tradition. Cohen calls into question the validity of religion itself--all religion--and concludes that religion has been one of the most evil influences in human history. Since this single essay reveals Cohen's religious views about as clearly as anything he wrote, it is worthwhile to examine it in some detail.

In the first place, Cohen dismisses the arguments of the "moderns" and so-called liberals who attempt to make religion into some sort of universal altruism. Such people often identify religion as "our highest aspiration," or "sentiment of benevolence," or even "altruistic conduct." All such identifications of religion are, says Cohen, merely "verbal tricks of definition,"[9] for they "rule out not only all the historic tribal and national religions, Hinduism, and most of the Old Testament, but also Christianity of the Orthodox, Catholic, and Fundamentalist-Protestant type."[10] These blurred definitions of religion miss the point entirely, for religion is a great deal more than a universal impulse to do good. Cohen defines religion as a social institution:

> Religion is first of all something that makes people do something when children are born, when they become mature, when they marry, and when they die. It makes people go to church, sacrifice, fast, feast, or pray. A religion that does not get so organized or embodied in life is a mere ghost, the creature of a cultivated imagination. Generally speaking, people get these habits by social heredity, according to the community in which they are born. The beliefs thus involved are more or less tacitly assumed. But such tacit beliefs do become at times explicit, and when this happens men cling to the verbal formula with the most amazing intensity and tenacity. Men are willing to burn others and be burned themselves on the question whether they should cross themselves with one finger or two, or whether God is one person of various aspects or natures, or three persons of one substance.[11]

Cohen then goes on to criticize religion, so defined, on three main grounds: 1) it strengthens superstition and hinders scientific investigation and the spirit of truth-seeking; 2) it often works as an anti-moral force; 3) it has a deleterious effect upon human emotional life.

Religion strengthens superstition because it utterly refuses to follow the scientific method of unquenchable curiosity about everything. It would be blasphemous, Cohen declares, for a person reared in a Mohammedan village to question the fact that there is no God but Allah, or that Mohammed is his prophet. In fact, it would be blasphemous even to assert that there is a good <u>probability</u> that there is only one God, Allah, or that Mohammed seems to have the best claim to being the most reliable of all the prophets. To the believer, these matters are beyond argument, beyond any sort of discussion. They are matters of faith, and as such are not capable of being subjected

to the ordinary methods of scientific verification. Any argument which weakens the traditional belief is dangerous and must be suppressed, for, by definition, it is error. Science, on the other hand, thrives on curiosity and constant questioning of its own fundamental assumptions. Furthermore, science is not weakened by new information or new hypotheses. New discovery serves to stimulate science:

> If the foundations of Euclidean geometry or Newtonian physics are suddenly questioned, some individual scientists may show their human limitations; but science as a whole has its field widened thereby, great enthusiasm is created for new investigations, and the innovators are objects of grateful general homage. Science does not need, therefore, to organize crusades to kill off heretics or unbelievers. Science, like art, enjoys its own activity and this enjoyment is not interfered with by anyone who obstinately refuses to join the game or scoffs at what the scientist has proved. The scientific banquet is not spoiled by our neighbors' refusing to enjoy it.[12]

Traditional religion, it might be added, is always threatened by "our neighbors refusing to enjoy it." Thus the whole long and bloody tradition of religious persecution.

Cohen goes on to illustrate this thesis concerning the strengthening of superstition by citing numerous examples of this phenomenon in the history of religion. Some of the more important ones are the belief in demonaic possession and the existence of all sorts of disembodied spirits, ghosts, angels, and other supernatural beings. Traditional religions--all of them, in one way or another--adhere to belief in such obviously absurd creatures, no matter how much evidence is offered to the contrary. Once the whole idea of the

supernatural is accepted, it is a short step to assert belief in witchcraft and magic. Again, according to Cohen, the history of the religions of the world--down into current times--displays instance after instance of belief in the most absurd forms of miracles, magic cures, and control of the external world by means of witchcraft and magic. It goes without saying that such beliefs have had hideous results for suffering humanity.

Belief in the supernatural adds up to a profound opposition to science. All religions have opposed scientific investigation in one way or another, and have thereby impeded human progress: "Religious truth is absolute and its possession makes everything else unimportant. Hence religion never preaches the duty of critical thought, or searching or investigating supposed facts."[13] This belief in the undemonstrable is not merely something in the past from which modern religion has freed itself. The contemporary fundamentalist, for example, when confronted with the demonstrable falsehoods of Holy Scripture in matters of biology and geology--such as the fact that the hare chews the cud, or the myth of Noah's world-wide flood--can simply say, "I believe in the word of the Spirit more than in the evidence offered by the eyes of my corruptible flesh."[14] This, says Cohen, is a find of intellectual Hara-kiri for which there is no help. When the will to believe is so strong that it cannot be shattered by logical proof--when in fact, credo quia absurdum is asserted as the apotheosis of piety--nothing can

be done. People who cling to such beliefs are beyond help, committed to an insane and desperate venture which takes them into a realm beyond reason or evidence. It is a melancholy fact that most of the people throughout human history have been so committed.

More disturbing than fundamentalism, however,--more disturbing because it appears to be more "reasonable"--is that kind of modernism which is willing to surrender the notion of infallibility of the Bible in matters scientific and yet tries to cling to it in matters of morality. This is even more intellectually corrupting, according to Cohen, for, "By 'liberal' and unhistorical interpretations he [the "modernist"] tries--contrary to the maxim of Jesus-- to pour new wine into old bottles and then pretend that the result <u>is</u> the ancient wine of moral wisdom."[15]

The argument that all these various superstitions are unimportant, that they merely reflect ideas in the ancient world--i.e., the superstitions of the people who, at one time or another, professed a given religion--is equally bad. For if this is true, then it must be inferred that religion is unable to stop superstition. If it cannot stop superstition, then it must be regarded as a culturally parasitic, rather than an intellectually creative force. Always, Cohen insists, there is some connection between supernaturalism and religion. Always, religion strengthens superstition, and thus impedes "the progress of science towards the attainment of new truth

as to human affairs."[16] Thus has religion worked to frustrate man's noblest ambitions, and thus is it an evil force in the world.

The second charge which Cohen directs against traditional religion is that, contrary to the popularly expressed view, it often serves as an anti-moral force. Cohen defines morality as "those rules of conduct that appeal to people as generally conducive to a decent human life."[17] Religion, however, always tends to rigidify its moral rules into sanctified taboos. When the conditions change under which human beings live, such taboos are usually too passionate, too rigidly held, to change easily themselves, and this results in all sorts of unnecessary tension and, ultimately, violent reaction. Moreover, the great religions of the world have usually stressed fear and punishment in order to maintain their outmoded taboos, and this too has had immoral outcomes. Originally, the Old Testament, as well as most Oriental and Greek and Roman religions, stressed the idea that the wicked would be punished in <u>this world</u>, and that the good would somehow triumph. Clearly, this is not the way things usually work out in the real world, so the doctrine of eternal torment in hell had to be invented. Such emphasis upon punishment and retribution inevitably leads, at best, to a brute conformity forced upon a sullen world. At worst, it leads to a rule of terror, and the history of religion shows more terror, hatred, burning and killing than it does compassion, understanding, and "rules of conduct that appeal to people as generally conducive to a

decent human life." The essence of historical religion is hatred, according to Cohen, not love and human sympathy. Mosaic Law commands the Children of Israel to kill all males and all non-virgin females whenever they conquer an enemy's city. The psalm "By the Rivers of Babylon" contains the line "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock." Religion has demanded that true believers slay all infidels, as in Islam, and urged all good Christians to take up arms in Holy Crusades to assert Christian dominance in the Middle East. How many thousands were tortured and committed to the flames, asks Cohen, by the Office of the Holy Inquisition? Wherever a single religion has become dominant, the liberal temper has been forced underground, and hatred and murder have become morally correct. Are things so very different today? Yes, Cohen suggests, but only because those who would foist their hideous perversion of a moral code upon the human family have been prevented from doing so in much of the world by their inability to seize absolute power. Whenever one religion achieves dominion, persecution of heretics will surely follow.[18]

One might properly ask if there is anything at all moral in any of the world's great religions. There most assuredly is, says Cohen. Witness, for example the moral teachings of the Buddha, the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, and Mohammed. The problem is that in the actual practice of religion, the moral preachments of the various prophets have invariably played nothing more than "an ornamental

part."[19] There are numerous examples of religious leaders preaching social justice as the proper end for the moral life: "...it is true that men like Amos, Isaiah, and Micah did among other themes preach social righteousness, feeding the widow and orphan, rather than the national cultus of Sabbaths, holy days and sacrifices."[20] Unfortunately, however, such moral preachments have always gotten lost in the more usual practice of religion:

> In the struggle for social justice, what has been the actual influence of religion? Here the grandiose claims of religious apologists are sadly belied by historic facts. The frequent claim that Christianity abolished slavery has nothing but pious wishes to support it. Indeed, in our own country, the clergy of the South was vigorously eloquent in defense of slavery as a divine institution. Nor was it the Church that was responsible for the initiation of the factory legislation that mitigated the atrocious exploitation of human beings in mines and mills. It was not the Church that initiated the movement to organize workmen for mutual support and defense, or that originated the effort to abolish factual slavery when men were paid in orders on company stores--a practice that has prevailed in some of our own states. The Church has generally been on the side of the powerful classes who have supported it--royalists in France, landowners in England, cientifico or exploiting class in Mexico, etc. Here and there some religious leader or group has shown sympathy with the oppressed; but the Church as a whole has property interests which affiliate it with those in power.[21]

These rather harsh words pretty well sum up Cohen's general indictment of organized religion's failure to advance morality among men. There was simply too much in the history and contemporary practices of the world's churches that was not "conducive to a decent human life." It is in this sense that Cohen condemned religion as an anti-moral force in the world.

Finally, Cohen asserted that religion has had a deleterious effect upon the emotional life of human beings. This final indictment is very closely related to his indictment of religion as an anti-moral force. The distinction is that in this case he emphasizes the internal, not the external, effects of religious practices on human beings. Cohen suggested that while religion may, at times, be a source of comfort to the anxious and the bereaved, such comfort is monstrously misleading because it is based upon outrageously false premises and is therefore fallacious. Man should be able to do better than to retreat into soothing falsehoods in times of stress.

The emotional uplift that supposedly accompanies the experience known in Protestant fundamentalism as "conversion" Cohen saw as a particularly disintegrating force based wholly upon fear and hysteria. As such, it has nothing of value to add to the already perilous emotional state of most human beings. He lumps together the excesses of fundamental Protestantism, the dervish frenzies of Islam, and the religious orgies of Semitic times which are euphemistically referred to in the Bible as "rejoicing before the Lord." All of these, Cohen contends, are examples of the "organized hysteria [which] is to be found in all religions."[22] "Organized hysteria" clearly does not contribute to good mental health, and thus religion stands condemned of contributing in large measure to the world's rampant insanity.

Like religious persecution, this kind of irrationalism results from religion's constant emphasis upon fear and superstition. We must believe, says the fanatic, because not to believe will result in eternal damnation. Thus begins the whole process of religious belief, unreason, and ultimate fanaticism. Cohen refuted James' idea in "The Will to Believe."[23] In this essay, James suggested that there is a great pragmatic argument in favor of religious belief--any religious belief. If you have doubt, says James, accept a faith and "you will be better off at once."[24] This, according to Cohen, is very risky, for no matter which religion an individual chooses, all the others will condemn him for his choice. Acceptance of one, in other words, leads to eternal damnation in the eyes of all the others. Can this possibly lead to a better mental state? Not according to Cohen, for any act of blind faith--in light of so many conflicting claims--is nothing more than an abrogation of reason, and this is tantamount to a willing acceptance of insanity. Instead of the blind leap of faith, Cohen counsels that man is infinitely advantaged if he accepts the notion that all the world's religions are nothing more than ancient hypotheses--hypotheses that have been, almost without exception, demonstrated to be absurd. The healthiest and ultimately most satisfying way is to follow reason and scientific method, in this as in all other human activities:

> Let us better leave them all alone and console ourselves with the hypothesis--a not altogether impossible one--that the starry universe and whatever gods there be do not worry

> about us at all, and will not resent our enjoying whatever humane and enlightened comfort and whatever vision of truth and beauty our world offers us. Let us cultivate our little garden. The pretended certainties of religion do not really offer much more. This is of course not a refutation of religion, or of the necessity which reflective minds find to grapple with it. But it indicates that there may be more wisdom and courage as well as more faith in honest doubt than in most of the creeds.[25]

The faith of a liberal, in other words, becomes the piety of an agnostic.

This concludes the summary of Morris Cohen's critical attack upon traditional religion. The question might now be raised as to his affirmation. Did Cohen have anything positive to say about religion? The answer to this is yes, if the definition of the term "religion" is expanded sufficiently. Cohen affirmed an "ideal of holiness," rather than a religious philosophy in any traditional sense. He was quite frank in admitting that he patterned his religious belief--if it can be called that--after Spinoza. In lieu of the traditional religions, Cohen argued for "the validity of the Spinozistic ideal of an intellectual love of God--the Amor Dei Intellectualis--as an ideal which may still serve as a beacon to current tendencies in life and thought."[26] Cohen was fully aware of the fact that Spinoza presents huge difficulties for the modern reader, not only because of the complexity of his thought, but also because of the change in terminology between Spinoza's time and ours. Terms like subject and object, or substance and essence, have lost their old meanings, but it is necessary to understand these terms as Spinoza used them

if we are to see what he was talking about. Thus certain definitions are in order.

In modern times, there has been a fundamental split between science and theology; in fact, there has been a monumental struggle between the two. This was not true for Spinoza who managed to make a union of a thoroughgoing naturalism in ethics and science and a "genuine piety toward that which has been held noble and sacred in the spiritual history of man."[27] The difficulty inherent in the modern bifurcation of science and theology can be resolved, however, if we simply realize that Spinoza made a careful distinction between the categories of time and eternity. Eternity in Spinoza's work is not just time stretched out asymptotically, as it is in much of modern thinking. Modern mathematics--and calculus in particular--has forced us to think of eternity as nothing more than the sum of all possible moments of discrete time. Expressed mathematically, this would be:

$$\sum_{n=0}^{m} t_n = t_o + t_1 + \ldots + t_m$$

where t = an increment of time on any time scale, and where $m \to \infty$. The mere fact that we can use the concept of infinity as an upper limit in any summation, forces us to think of time and eternity as parts of the same continuum, or more accurately, of moments of time as parts of the continuum of which eternity is the whole. Eternity, in other words, has blurred into the mathematical concept of

infinity. In Spinoza's work, however, time and eternity are distinct categories which belong to two crucially different aspects of existence. Time is a category which belongs to physical existence, or to what Spinoza calls "extended body;" eternity is a category which belongs to meaning, or to "idea" in Spinoza's terminology.[28] If this distinction is kept in mind--which is almost impossible, so potent is the cultural pressure of modern mathematics--then it can be seen how Spinoza was able to reconcile naturalism and piety.

It is clear, Cohen contended, that although Spinoza consistently used the term "God" he did so in a way that was completely devoid of anthropomorphic theism. This has caused great difficulty down through the years, for men cannot escape thinking of God as some kind of super-human being. Spinoza, however, utterly rejected the notion that there is a "God" with human-like traits--such as will or intellect--who can act either for or against human beings. To Spinoza, the term "God", "obviously denotes what we call today the realm of reality which is the object of all science, the system or necessary concatenation of nature."[29] Thus, according to Cohen, God meant nothing more--or less--to Spinoza than the universe, or what might be called the Ineffable All, or the Unknowable Whole. These latter two terms would have worked just as well as, or perhaps better than, the term "God," because they are stripped of all anthropomorphic connotation. Nevertheless, Spinoza used "God," and there is not a great deal which can be done about that.

The Ineffable All, or the Unknowable Whole, or "the necessary concatenation of nature," or God, contains two "aspects": matter, or extended body, and meaning, or idea. The category of time applies only to extended body; the category of eternity applies only to idea. Thus, according to Cohen, the key to understanding Spinoza is in making sure one knows just which category Spinoza is using at any given moment, for then one will be able to tell whether Spinoza is dealing with the realm of extended body or the realm of idea: i.e., one will know whether he is beholding the shadows on the cave's wall or the "real" creatures which cast the shadows. These two aspects co-exist, but they cannot be reduced to each other. This, of course, is in large measure the source in philosophical literature of Cohen's principle of polarity. Thus does the ghost of Plato still appear in modern philosophy.

Logic exists in the Unknowable Whole, but it is an "attribute" which Spinoza calls "the intellect of God."[30] Spinoza warns, however, that the term "intellect" does not mean the same thing in this context that it does when applied to man. Again, there is no anthropomorphic theism in Spinoza. Logic, in a way, bridges the gap between extended body and idea, i.e., between matter and meaning. In other words, man's intellectual love of God--the Amor Dei Intellectualis--is nothing more than the exercise of reason; the phrase simply denotes "devotion to philosophic or cosmic truth."[31]

Spinoza suggested that every existence refers to extended body. In this way, he is a thorough-going materialist. But there is also a world of ideas that is timeless, where the category of eternity functions, and this too is "real" in the sense that mathematical relations are real. It is for man to test his ideas--which are eternal and outside the natural order of things, even though they may have application to that order, against the evidence of the world ordered by time. Both exist, the eternal, and the time-controlled, and both must be regarded together. A focus upon the eternal to the exclusion of the time-controlled leads to a hopeless otherworldliness and abandons humanity to helpless suffering. Conversely, a complete focus upon the time-controlled leads to a vicious nominalism which cuts the cosmos up into tiny pieces bearing no relationship to each other. If, however, the principle of polarity is applied, then both categories can be seen as complementary and a decent human life is possible. Spinoza's "insistence that ideas, as logical essences or meanings, are eternal or timeless (that is, not subject to the processes of material change of which time is the measure) enables him to save all the profound human values of neo-Platonism and spiritualism generally."[32] The intellectual love of God demands that men see things, in other words, but also that these things be seen sub specie aeternitatis. Thus the actual meaning of things contains both a temporal and an eternal component. The Amor Dei Intellectualis forces us to reject a brute particularism and to see a

"real ground for rational discussion or toleration of the ideal of an ever wider integration of our natural interests."[33] The intellectual love of God, in other words, allows man to reconcile a thoroughgoing naturalism concerning the things of this world, with a piety toward the things of eternity. And this, suggests Cohen, is the essence of true religion:

> those who complacently deny any religious value to the Amor Dei Intellectualis on the ground that it is merely... scientific interest [can be easily disposed of.] The facile and fatal use of the word "merely" was easy in the days when to the transcendental snobbery of theologians scientific knowledge was a relatively unimportant affair. Doubtless, also, so long as the term "scientific" is so often applied to particular investigations which leave the investigator hardly richer in the wisdom of life outside of his narrow specialty, it seems rather violent to identify the scientific and the religious motive. But when we recall the Amor Dei Intellectualis is not knowledge of isolated details, but the union of our mind and nature attained by self-knowledge, we need not hesitate to recognize the profoundly religious value which Spinoza's thought has had for so many.[34]

In this quite sophisticated sense, it is proper to say that Cohen was a religious man, but obviously his, like Spinoza's was a religion utterly foreign to any normal meaning of the term. The best that can be said is that he stood before the vast mysteries of the cosmos armed with a willingness to probe as far as reason would carry. But at the same time, he was constantly resigned to the finitude of man's existence, which is perhaps the ultimate tragedy of human life. In a letter to a grandaughter, Cohen briefly summarized his thoughts about time and eternity in a very short passage of stunning clarity:

> Brief is the life of man, and of uncertain duration is his handiwork, be it ships, houses, governments or laws. But the echoes from soul to soul will go on so long as human life lasts.[35]

Cohen devoted the last days of his life to the cause of Jews all over the world. He never returned to a belief in the supernatural elements of Judaism, of course, but as one reared in that rich tradition he could not escape a profound sense of sympathy for his fellow Jews in their days of agony in Germany and elsewhere. As mentioned before, his daughter summarized his life's work in the very striking and very fitting metaphor: "the first and last chapters in the book of his life were Jewish."[36] Therefore, it would seem that it is quite proper to conclude this dissertation with a brief account of Cohen's general attitude toward Judaism and a discussion of his last labors in Jewish affairs.

Morris Cohen gladly accepted the fact that he belonged to that group of human family which has traditionally been called Jewish. He was fully aware, however, of the enormous difficulties involved in classifying human beings into such groups. Are the Jews a race, a people, a nation, a religion, a cultural entity, an ethnic group, a historic group, a linguistic group?[37] All these terms have been suggested at one time or another as descriptive of those people known as Jews. Perhaps, as Haddon and Huxley suggest, they are

> ...not a race but only a people after all.... The Jews can rank neither as nation nor even as ethnic unit, but rather as a socio-religious group.... Like many other groups its members are held together by external pressure of various kinds,

> partly by a long historic memory, partly by a sense of common suffering, partly by a religion. These factors, acting through long ages, have produced a common consciousness which is relaxed when the pressures are relaxed and intensified with the reverse process.[38]

Krugman suggested that a Jew is a person who "belongs not to a race but to a Jewish community,"[39] while Seltzer defined the Jews as "all individuals of the so-called 'white' races of mankind who, by virtue of family tradition do practice or whose ancestors did practice the religion of Judaism."[40] Bram summarized some of the extreme difficulties in defining the term "Jew" in these words:

> Louis Wirth has said that "the elementary question as to whether the Jews are a race, a nationality or a cultural group remains unsettled." Other writers who have tried to find a proper definition for them have expressed the difficulties in very characteristic terms. They refer to the Jews as "an unusual type of nationality," "a social anomaly," "a peculiar people." Talcott Parsons considers them "a unique social phenomenon," Carl Mayer calls them "a chimeric people" leading "a life of unreality."[41]

Kennedy attempted to take into account all the various social, cultural, religious, national, and even biological factors involved and came up with the idea of a "religio-national" group:

> We see then that the Jews manifest traits characteristic of a nationality in their common traditions, common patterns of ideas and behavior, and common ethnocentrism or consciousness of kind, and that these transcend whatever other national affiliations they may assume. Most of these traits are closely intermeshed with their religion, so much so that some readers may insist that it is enough to call them a religious group rather than stress the point of nationality.... The issue can be resolved by designating the Jews as a "religio-national" group.[42]

Such a "religio-national" grouping is somewhat similar to the idea advanced by Nathan Glazer in American Judaism that Jews must be seen as a "people" and as a "nation."[43]

Herskovits very accurately described the dilemma faced by any student who would attempt to give a single description that would hold for all the people known as Jews. He pointed out that two parameters must be dealt with: the physical and the cultural. The problem is, "they vary independently, and rarely, if ever, exhibit a one-to-one correspondence."[44] Herskovits cites the case of the Jews of Cochin, India, as an example and a warning to those who would complacently assume that they "know" what Jews are, and then says:

> The matter of definition is especially baffling because there is enough similarity in physical type between enough Jews to permit the development of a stereotype that in the minds of the laity receives daily reinforcement and even justifies certain scientific classifications for certain Jewish sub-groups. There is, also, enough of a least common denominator of belief, a certain minimum of traditionally accepted values, a certain sense of historic continuity held by enough Jews to make these aspects of Jewish life loom large in the minds of those concerned with definition. Yet whether on the level of physical type or of culture, the exceptions remain, exceeding any limits that can seemingly be drawn. This is undoubtedly the reason why it is far easier to say what Jews are not than to describe what they are.[45]

Thus the extreme problem of defining with any degree of precision the term "Jew." In another work, Herskovits said, "A Jew is a person who calls himself a Jew or who is called Jewish by others."[46] Perhaps this is as close to a definition as we shall ever get.

Morris Cohen was very familiar with this fundamental problem in Jewish life. He knew as well as anyone that there was no unanimity of opinion on the question of what constitutes "Jewishness." Moreover, he was also aware of the huge problem of disunity within the Jewish community. In the 1930's, as the horrors of Nazism were becoming known and Jews everywhere--including those in the United States--were being daily engulfed by a rising tide of anti-Semitism, some people began to urge that Jews close their ranks in mutual defense. This proved to be impossible, however, for Jewish life is not an organic whole, i.e., all Jews, in America or elsewhere, are united on virtually nothing. As Israel Zangwill once wrote, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One, but we, his people, are dual and so undone."[47] Cohen did not accept this idea. In fact, he insisted that the strength of the Jewish community lay in its great diversity. The diversity which makes it impossible to answer the simple question, What is a Jew? is, in fact, an example of the great liberal tradition. Cohen asked, "Can the Jews unite today on Judaism as a religion? To which we at once ask, What kind of Judaism? or, Whose interpretation of Judism?"[48] He then went on to point out that Jews, in America at least, are divided into four quite different groups: Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox congregations, as well as a huge number of Jews--like himself--who have no religious affiliation at all. Obviously, these disparate groups would find it exceedingly difficult to unite on anything. What, then, was to be done?

Should Jews all simply go their separate ways and trust the winds of fate to blow them into a snug harbor? This Cohen would not assent to either. As would be expected, he fell back upon his faith in liberalism, in this as in all other human endeavors. The so-called Jewish Problem could not be solved by assimilationism or non-assimilationism, religion or irreligion, Zionism or anti-Zionism, nationalism or internationalism. All of these were illiberal and fanatical responses to a grave problem that required, instead, reason and scientific method:

> ...it seemed to me that the only possible basis of unity was the basis that gives unity to the disagreements of scientists, a common acceptance of the need for demonstrable knowledge, based on nonpartisan scholarly studies. The authority of the facts is, as the history of science shows, sufficient for practical purposes. Dictatorships are not necessary in medicine or in methods of hygiene. In any case, it seemed worth while to try to mobilize intellectual forces for study of the present and prospective situation of the Jewish people and to put the findings of such research at the disposal of all men of good will. Human knowledge and understanding may not enable us to solve all the problems of the Jew in an unjust world, but abandoning the effort to understand the underlying causes and to avoid forseeable errors is intellectual cowardice.[49]

Out of this adherence to his basic belief in the efficacy of reason and scientific method was born the Conference on Jewish Relations as well as the Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems. It is significant to note--especially for a student of American culture--that Cohen always viewed the problems of Jews in America within the framework of the larger American society of which Jews are an important minority. In fact, the chapter dealing

with his work on behalf of Jewish causes in A Dreamer's Journey is entitled "Jewish Social Studies: A Contribution to American Democracy."[50] Thus Cohen's work in Jewish affairs is, in a way, a contribution to the larger problem of overall interpretation of American culture.

To Cohen, the United States represented the high-water mark of western liberalism. This is why, when asked to speak before the Menorah Society on the question of "The Jewish Problem," he got to his feet and said, "Gentlemen, there is no Jewish Problem."[51] Then he sat down. After the wave of indignation subsided a bit, he returned to the podium and explained that the problems of Jews in America are in reality the problems of human beings all over the world, although Jews might have had more than their fair share. Such problems cannot be solved by focusing exclusive attention upon this or that minority, but by getting down to the root causes of the evils that beset man in general. Thus the way to solve the "Jewish Problem" in America--or anywhere else--is not by propaganda and not by appeals to human sympathy, but by basic research into such things as the historic causes of anti-Semitism and the actual situation of Jews in the larger society.

Cohen addressed himself to a whole galaxy of Jewish "Problems." In his published writings there are essays on such varied subjects as Zionism, Jewish education, the problem of assimilation, the study of Yiddish, the establishment of a Hebrew

University, "Roads for American Jewry,"[52] and Jewish social studies in general. The culmination of all this work in Jewish affairs was, of course, the Conference on Jewish Relations and the Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems. We shall return to these ventures a bit later.

Quite early in his career, when Zionism was a burning issue and the question of modern Palestine first occupied the world's attention, Cohen took the somewhat unpopular position that the creation of a Jewish national state would, in fact, be a setback for liberal civilization. He intimated that Zionism was a species of "tribalism"[53] and condemned it as destructive of the liberal faith:

> Nationalistic Zionism demands not complete individual liberty for the Jew, but group autonomy. What this may mean in practice can be gathered from a general tendency to deny to anyone born a Jew the right to follow his conscience and to abandon the Jewish religion. Indeed, how could a Jewish Palestine allow complete religious freedom, freedom of intermarriage, and free non-Jewish immigration, without soon losing its very reason for existence? A national Jewish Palestine must necessarily mean a state founded on a peculiar race, a tribal religion, and a mystic belief in a peculiar soil, whereas liberal America has traditionally stood for separation of Church and State, the free mixing of races, and the fact that men can change their habitation and language and still advance the process of civilization.[54]

Obviously, this article did not win Cohen many friends among Zionists. Years later, however, just as the State of Israel was about to take its place among the community of nations, Cohen modified his position a bit. He held fast to the idea that the best hope for the Jews

was to follow a liberal, pluralistic course--as could be done in the United States--but he also admitted that:

> ...Just as crimes may be committed in the name of liberty, so good deeds may be done under the banners of a false creed. The admiration of the civilized world is due to the achievements of the Jewish settlements in Palestine over the past quarter century, and to the courage, wisdom, and faith in life's better possibilities that have made these achievements possible. Impartial technical observers...have hailed the demonstration made in Palestine of the great possibilities of scientifically and humanely conducted agriculture, free from the illiberal tax policies that, through centuries of Turkish rule, hindered the conservation of the soil and the development of human enterprise. These achievements, however, did not presuppose the establishment of a Jewish state, and I trust that they may be advanced and extended in years to come within the framework of a nonsectarian state that allows equal rights to all--Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, and atheists alike.[55]

On the question of assimilation of Jews into the larger society--particularly in America--Cohen was also quite outspoken. He said that Jews should neither seek assimilation as an end in itself, nor fear it as a movement that would soon eliminate Jews as a traditional group. No reasonable person, Cohen suggested, could believe that mankind's present divisions would continue forever. Over a very long period of time--and very long should be emphasized--all groups would merge into each other and new groups would inevitably come into being. But this was not of immediate concern, for even if the highest rate of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles ever known anywhere in the world were to continue unabated for centuries, the laws of statistics dictated that Jews would persist as an identifiable group for at least two thousand more years.[56] This fact led Cohen

to conclude that neither complete assimilation nor complete separation were viable alternatives for American Jews. Complete assimilation was a mathematical absurdity; attempts at complete separation would only lead to an intensification of anti-Semitism and an estrangement from liberal friends outside the Jewish community. Instead, Jews should continue to follow the liberal way, making whatever contributions to humane civilization they could:

> We must plan to participate fully in all America's cultural activities, for thus only can we contribute to the common good. On the other hand, it is neither safe nor dignified to ignore our peculiar inheritance and try to become mere imitations of the English, Scotch, Irish, Dutch, Swedes, Hugenots, or Germans who came over on the various subsequent sailings of the Mayflower. We can make the most effective contribution to civilization by being our own selves and not mere slavish copies of others.[57]

Participating in America's cultural activities, while being true to the Jewish tradition, necessarily implied an improved system of Jewish education: "Jewish children ought to know Jewish history. They ought to know what the Talmudic legislation really meant."[58] Cohen made many specific suggestions regarding the future of Jewish education in America, but above all he suggested that it must perform two crucial tasks:

> The first is...to make the substance of Talmudic Judaism better known or more accessible to the great mass of our people. This will require more organized effort on the part of scholars acquainted with Talmudic literature to seek to put it in modern terms. The second and more difficult task is that of adapting the content of traditional Jewish religious education to the needs of today. We are facing new problems and we must ask what light, if any, the old teachings can shed on them. This task cannot be met by rhetorical

> apologetics but requires a genuine understanding of current problems as well as a sympathetic knowledge of the old learning.[59]

One important way for Jewish education to meet "the needs of today" was to focus a considerable amount of attention upon economic education, for "the economic life of Jews is full of peculiarities which makes their position perilous, and which, therefore, requires that we pay closer attention to the vocational education of our children."[60] This was Cohen's answer to the extreme problem of discrimination in the hiring practices of certain American industries. Cohen was intimately aware of this aspect of anti-Semitism--he had suffered from it himself during his early years at City College--and he called all forms of anti-Semitism "an insult to human intelligence, as well as to those of us who are directly attacked."[61] No Jew hated anti-Semitism more than Cohen did. But his way to attack this evil force in the world was to exercise, again, reason and scientific method rather than to rely upon impassioned pleas for mercy, justice, or human sympathy. The world's history shows that such pleading almost never does any good. In fact, it often seems further to enflame those who would wield the oppressor's whip. The best way to attack this acute problem, Cohen suggested, was first to get the facts: find out, for example, precisely why Jews are over-represented in the garment industry and under-represented in utilities and transportation. Are there valid historical reasons for such phenomena, or are all such instances nothing more than examples of a

monstrous conspiracy of anti-Semitism? It is important to see who actually discriminates, and why, and then see what can be done. If Jewish students could be armed with such information, Cohen contended, they would find their way much easier in the world.

In regard to Yiddish "as a unique expression of a great people"[62] Cohen expressed fear that, sadly, it might disappear from the American scene.[63] However, he strongly urged that American Jews do all they could to preserve and strengthen the Yiddish tradition:

> I think...there is a great social value in maintaining Yiddish, not only for the cultural opportunities it presents, but also to keep some portion of the Jewish people in touch with the life of our own immediate past and in touch with the majority of the Jewish people abroad, whose language is predominately Yiddish.[64]

It goes without saying that Cohen's advocacy of the Yiddish language was completely in line with his belief in an open, liberal, pluralistic society.

When these ideas concerning various aspects of Jewish culture are viewed within the framework of Cohen's general liberal faith, the main idea behind the Conference on Jewish Relations becomes clear. Cohen saw the Conference as a scholarly agency, the only purpose of which was to gather factual data on "the true state of Jewish social, economic, and political activities."[65] It would be an "Intelligence Bureau for the Jewish people."[66] Throughout the early years of the Conference's existence, it was pretty much

a one-man operation. Its "headquarters" was the Cohen apartment in New York City, and Cohen was forced to do virtually all the work:

> He carried on like a juggler keeping a good many balls in play. He became not only the Conference's chief planner but also its principal money raiser. He helped to guide research and to obtain sponsorship of research projects from universities, foundations, communities, and individuals of wealth. He organized meetings on crucial topics, tried to build up membership, sponsored publication of the research, helped maintain working relationships with other organizations in Jewish or social studies, wrote annual reports, and kept up with the correspondence and administrative detail. Beginning in 1939, there was considerably more.[67]

Although the Conference on Jewish Relations was never large, it vindicated, in part at least, Cohen's contention that unity in diversity was possible and could bear sweet fruit. The members of the Conference included "Orthodox and Reformed, religious and irreligious Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists, socialists and individualists."[68] They were "not tied to any cause or creed less universal than the old, simple faith that the search for truth is an essential part of any progress towards a more humane and tolerant world."[69] The Conference on Jewish Relations, in other words, was the culmination of a lifetime faith in the way of liberalism.

The work produced by this small band of liberal men and women[70] was indeed astounding. Cohen and others, for example, realized that not nearly enough was known about the fate of the Jews in Nazi Germany and throughout Europe. In 1935, the Conference sent Professor Oscar Janowsky, an authority on minority rights, to Europe. His mission was to gather information on what was happening

to various minorities in the European countries. Janowsky's research was incorporated in at least two important documents. The first was a report entitled International Aspects of German Racial Policies[71] which backed up a petition submitted to the League of Nations on behalf of European Jews.[72] The second contained Janowsky's report to the Conference on the status of Jews in Eastern Europe. It was entitled People at Bay: The Jewish Problem in East Central Europe.[73]

Another important development in the years just before World War II was Conference-member James M. Rosenberg's success in convincing James G. McDonald, League of Nations High Commissioner for German Refugees, to include in his letter of resignation to the League "a documented analysis of the Nazi crimes against humanity."[74] Here, too, the Janowsky data proved to be of inestimable value.

Obviously, the efforts of the Conference on Jewish Relations were not enough to save millions of European Jews from the unspeakable horrors of Buchenwald, Dachau, and Auschwitz. In this sense, one might be justified in calling the Conference a failure. There can be no doubt, however, that the publication of these various documents served the exceedingly important function of alerting the world to Nazi activities. They contributed in an unmeasurable way to the uniting of international opinion against the evil force of Nazism, and, ultimately, to Germany's defeat in World War II. If the work of the Conference is viewed in this light, it must be seen as a success.

The Conference did other important work at home. A survey of racial attitudes among college students--sponsored jointly by the Conference and Pi Lambda Phi Fraternity--was conducted by Eugene L. Horowitz under the supervision of the well-known sociologists Robert Lynd, Ralph Linton and Gardner Murphy.[75] One of the important outcomes of this survey was to demonstrate quite convincingly that racial prejudice is almost wholly a product of ignorance and irrationalism, not a result of bad experiences with "other" people.[76]

Studies financed in whole or in part by the Conference included "Jewish Workers in the New York City Men's Clothing Industry", "The Economic Structure of the Jewish Community in Detroit," and "The Jews in the Waste Industry in Detroit."[77] Pure sociological studies like this provided the kind of hard data that Cohen knew was necessary to solve the problems facing American Jewry.

In 1935, the Conference approached the problem of anti-Semitism in a more direct way by hosting an extended meeting to discuss the anthropological, historical, and legal aspects of this problem. The meeting was attended by such eminent scholars as Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Hans Kohn, Salo Baron, and many others.[78] Seven years later, the results of this meeting were published in the important volume, Essays on Anti-Semitism.

Another pioneering project of the Conference on Jewish Studies was a series of investigations into Jewish demography.

Studies were made of the Jews in the legal profession in New York City, of Jews in medicine in various cities, and of the general occupational distribution of Jews throughout the nation. In 1943, a number of these early population studies was compiled and edited by Sophia Robison. They were published in yet another book sponsored by the Conference, Jewish Population Studies.

The Conference's work in studies of Jewish occupational distribution was a major factor in the creation of the Jewish Occupational Council in 1939. This organization was sponsored by a huge number of Jewish philanthropic, educational, and cultural organizations that were more used to going their own separate ways than they were in cooperating.[79] Again, Cohen felt vindicated in his faith in liberalism, in unity in diversity:

> ...the co-operation of so many organizations in sponsoring its [the Jewish Occupational Council's] work was the best possible proof of my hunch that, with patience and good will, traditional and hereditary differences between organizations, as between individuals, can be subordinated to a common enterprise devoted to the ascertainment of objective truth. For only an organization committed to the search for objective truth could give to those who stood at the threshold of their careers the help they needed to chart useful and rewarding journeys at a time when the shadows of discrimination were lengthening throughout the land.[80]

Also in 1939, the Conference began to publish the scholarly journal, Jewish Social Studies. In its very first issue, Cohen contributed the essay, "Philosophies of Jewish History."[81] In the years 1940 and 1941, he wrote eleven book reviews for the new journal.[82]

The Conference on Jewish Relations was also a prime mover in establishing the Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems. In this, as in many of its other efforts, the Conference was aided by other Jewish organizations which were larger and better endowed. In this case, it was the American Jewish Committee which came to the aid of the tiny Conference. It was at Cohen's urging, however, that the Jewish community at large began to think about problems of the post-war years. In his last Presidential Report, in June of 1940, Cohen told the Conference:

> When the European war ends, Hitler's war against the Jews is not likely to be terminated. And in any case acute problems of relief and migration will face us, for which preparatory studies must be instituted now.[83]

There was a pressing need for a consideration of these problems, but no one seemed to care. In July, 1940, for example, the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science devoted an entire issue to a consideration of the conditions for a lasting world peace. It failed to say a word about Jews. Cohen knew that this would not do, so he laid out a set of blueprints for research into the post-war problems that would inevitably be faced by world Jewry. These plans broke down into three parts: 1) problems of rehabilitation and relief; 2) problems of migration of Jews to other lands; 3) problems concerning the vindication of Jewish rights in particular and human rights in general.[84]

Once these general areas of research had been spelled out, and various projects initiated, Cohen felt that it was time for him to step down from leadership in these organizations and return to the life of philosophy. He had not sought a management role in the first place, but events had thrust one upon him. When he felt he had done all a philosopher could do, he turned away from active life and back to his own labors. The immediate project at hand was the preparation of the Carus lectures for 1941. These lectures, on the topic "The Meaning of Human History," contained Cohen's final statement concerning human freedom in the full context of history. He wrote:

> As I returned to the writing of the Carus Lectures... it was with the sense that the struggle for freedom in our own generation would be effectively waged only as we saw it in all its perspective in the history of the struggle for liberal civilization, to which so many peoples in so many ages have contributed. In a very real sense the development of this vision might be the most enduring contribution I could make to the cause of human liberty and human tolerance in the native land of my children and grandchildren.... Liberalism and the toleration of differences are the fine flowers of civilization which prepare the seeds of material and spiritual freedom. All our material comforts and present intellectual resources are derived from the spirit of free inquiry and the taming of fanatical group intolerance. The cultivation of such liberalism has throughout the ages called forth heroic labor and at times martyrdom. But when chill autumn blasts and cruel wintry frosts come, the sacred plant which bears the fine flowers and seeds of the life abundant, becomes neglected and despised. Only its faithful guardians seek to preserve it until the warm spring sunshine comes again.[85]

This is the main theme of Cohen's final summing up, The Meaning of Human History.[86] Sadly, Cohen did not live to see The Meaning of Human History into print. He died just a few months before the book

was issued. In this book, which Cohen himself regarded as his magnum opus,[87] he touched upon such different topics as historiography; the role of metaphysics in the writing of history; the importance of considering what might have been as well as what was; the role of causation in history; the importance of geographic factors in determining historical events; the biological element in history, the role of "Great Men"; the study of institutions as an approach to historical understanding; and finally the necessity of developing an ethical view of history. These vastly different topics were linked together by Cohen's insistence upon the union of history and philosophy. In history as in all other human endeavors it is necessary to combine factual knowledge with a larger vision. This leads to what Cohen called the tragic view of history: "The tragic view of human history widens our sympathies and prevents us from becoming dull to the finer possibilities which wiser conduct or a different turn of events might have realized... it illumines the direction in which our efforts should be exerted if the history of the future is to be brighter than the past."[88]

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What is the final word that can be said about Morris Cohen? That he was a great American? Without question. That he was a first-rate teacher, scholar, and philosopher? Surely no one would disagree with that. But when all this is said, there is still more.

In regard to Cohen's involvement in Jewish affairs, Levi M. Olan wrote in 1953:

> The fact is that we need a Morris Raphael Cohen in our Jewish life to shake the smugness out of our religious, cultural and communal life. His writings may irritate many, but like those of the prophets, they are the words of a wise and thoughtful Jew.[89]

Substitute the phrase "American life" for "Jewish life" in this statement and we have the true key to Cohen's lasting value. Cohen was a critic, a fact that should be abundantly clear by this time. But he demonstrated that a valid criticism demands a great deal more than whining complaints about the muddy terrain all human beings must sometimes cross. Cohen saw the mud. But he was also able to lift his eyes onto the heavens and pass on to future generations a vision of things brightened by sunshine. In his own language, good criticism, like good philosophy or good science or good history, demanded a combination of "vision" and "technique." By being true to the "vision," while at the same time doing all in his power to develop "technique," Morris Cohen exemplified as few men have the Amor Die Intellectualis.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

1. Morris R. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949), p. 211.

2. Ibid., 69.

3. Ibid., 69.

4. See Lenora Cohen Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher: Morris R. Cohen in Life and Letters (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), Ch. XIII for a fuller discussion of this aspect of Cohen's religious life. See especially pp. 211-215 for a very revealing exchange of letters between Cohen and the Reverend Frederick Reustle, pastor of St. George's Church, New York, on the subject of hypocrites who insist upon remaining affiliated with churches despite their disbelief in the supernatural.

5. Ibid., 208.

6. Bertrand Russell, "Why I Am Not a Christian," in Bertrand Russell, Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), pp. 7, 3-23.

7. Morris R. Cohen, "The Dark Side of Religion," in Arthur L. Swift, Jr., ed., Religion Today, A Challenging Enigma (New York: Whittlesey House, 1933), pp. 75-105. Reprinted in Morris R. Cohen, The Faith of a Liberal(New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1946; Books for Libraries Press, 1970), pp. 337-361.

8. Ibid., 339.

9. Ibid., 339.

10. Ibid., 339.

11. Ibid., 340-341.

12. Ibid., 342.

13. Ibid., 345.

14. Ibid., 346.

15. Ibid., 346.

16. Ibid., 347.

17. Ibid., 347.

18. Cohen piles up example after example of the cruel persecutions that have grown out of the fanaticism of organized religion. He concludes by suggesting that the activities of the Ku Klux Klan and the religious intolerance displayed in the Presidential campaign of 1928 are examples which show that religious persecution is not yet a dead issue in the United States or elsewhere. Had this essay been written a few years later, Cohen would no doubt have used the example of Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews as the most recent example--at least in the western world--of the horrid excesses to which religious belief can lead. For although many, many things contributed to Nazi anti-Semitism, it must be admitted that Christianity's traditional hatred of Judaism was also a most important factor. No doubt some will say that Cohen's view of "The Dark Side of Religion" was rather extreme, that he should have stressed the positive aspects of religion more strongly. But just as surely, the indictments which he brings against all the world's religions are, in fact, true. The history of religion shows as much, if not more, blood and fire as it does love and understanding, and any historian who does not take that into account is remiss in his duties.

19. Cohen, "The Dark Side of Religion," p. 352.

20. Ibid., 352.

21. Ibid., 353.

22. Ibid., 355.

23. William James, "The Will to Believe," in Ralph B. Perry, ed., Pragmatism and Other Essays (Meridian Books, World Publishing Company, 1965).

24. Cohen, "The Dark Side of Religion," p. 361.

25. Ibid., 361.

26. Morris R. Cohen, "The Intellectual Love of God," The Menorah Journal, Vol. XI (Aug. 1925), p. 332. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal, pp. 307-319. See also, Morris R. Cohen, "Spinoza: Prophet of Liberalism," New Republic (March 30, 1927), p. 164. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal, pp. 13-19.

27. Cohen, "The Intellectual Love of God," p. 308.

28. Ibid., 308-309.

29. Ibid., 308.

30. Ibid., 309.

31. Ibid., 309.

32. Ibid., 311-312.

33. Ibid., 313.

34. Ibid., 316-317.

35. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 238.

36. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. xiii.

37. Melville J. Herskovits, "Who Are the Jews?" in Louis Finkelstein, ed., The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), p. 1151.

38. J. S. Huxley and A. C. Haddon, We Europeans: A Survey of "Racial Problems"(New York: n. p., 1936), p. 147. Quoted in Herskovits, "Who Are the Jews?," p. 1153.

39. Wilton M. Krugman, "Physical Anthropology" (MS. of an article prepared for World Encyclopedia Institute, 1945). Quoted in Herskovits, "Who Are the Jews," p. 1154.

40. Carl C. Seltzer, "The Jew--His Racial Status," Harvard Medical Alumni Bulletin, vol. 13, no. 3, 1939, p. 68.

41. Joseph Bram, "The Social Identity of the Jews," Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences, Ser. II, vol. vi, no. 6, 1944, p. 194.

42. Raymond Kennedy, "The position and Future of the Jews in America," in Isacque Graeber and Stewart H. Britt, eds., Jews in a Gentile World (New York: n. p., 1942), p. 35. Quoted in Herskovits, "Who Are the Jews?," p. 1155.

43. Nathan Glazer, American Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp 3-11.

44. Herskovits, "Who Are the Jews?," p. 1156.

45. Ibid., 1157.

46. Melville J. Herskovits, "When is a Jew a Jew?" Modern Quarterly, vol. iv, no. 2, 1927, pp. 109-117.

47. Quoted in Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 240.

48. Morris R. Cohen, "As a Liberal Views It," in Marvin Lowenthal, Morris R. Cohen, and Erich Gutkind, Proposed Roads for American Jewry (New York: National Council of Jewish Women, 1938), pp. 51-79. Reprinted under the title "Roads for American Jewry" in Morris R. Cohen, Reflections of a Wandering Jew (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950), pp. 6-22.

49. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, pp. 240-241.

50. Ibid., Ch. 27.

51. Ibid., 233.

52. Cohen, "Roads for American Jewry," pp. 6-22.

53. Morris R. Cohen, "Zionism: Tribalism or Liberalism?" New Republic (March 8, 1919), p. 182. Reprinted in Cohen, Faith of a Liberal, pp. 326-333.

54. Ibid., 329.

55. Ibid., 333.

56. Cohen, "Roads for American Jewry," p. 17: What is the largest proportion of intermarriage that has ever actually taken place in any country that we know? In Germany, at the height of the liberal wave, it was only about fourteen per cent. Recently I read some figures--I do not know how reliable they are--that in Czechoslovakia twenty percent of Jews marry non-Jews. At that rate, not allowing for any natural increase, and ignoring the fact that some children of intermarriage naturally revert to the Jewish fold, it would take eighty generations before the Jews of this country would totally disappear. Counting between twenty-five and thirty years for a generation, this means between 2,000 and 2,400 years.

57. Ibid., 18.

58. Ibid., 18.

59. Cohen, Reflections of a Wandering Jew, p. 25.

60. Ibid., 37.

61. Ibid., 8.

62. Morris R. Cohen, "Jews Can Enrich America by Being True to Themselves: Cohen Sees Yiddish as a Unique Expression of a Great People," Emanu-El (April 22, 1932), pp. 1, 16.

63. Morris R. Cohen, "Professor Cohen Forecasts Disappearance of Yiddish," American Hebrew, 130 (1932), pp. 553, 557.

64. Cohen, Reflections of a Wandering Jew, p. 33.

65. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 223. A letter from Cohen to James M. Rosenberg dated October 26, 1936.

66. Ibid., 223.

67. Ibid., 220.

68. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 243.

69. Ibid., 243.

70. Some of the early members of the Conference on Jewish Relations were Professors Einstein of Princeton, Wolfson and Frankfurter of Harvard, Sapir of Yale, Sharfman of Michigan, Perlman of Wisconsin, Kandel, Baron, Michael and Israel Wechsler of Columbia, Dean Klapper of City College, Dean Loeb of George Washington University and Vice-President Deutsch and Professor Max Radin of the University of California. The principal fund-raiser in the early days was Cohen's long-time friend, Arthur S. Meyer. Later staff members included Mark Hirsch, Melvin Fagen, Harry Rosenfield (Cohen's son-in-law), Joshua Starr, Theodor Gastev, and Mina Wagman. Salo W. Baron succeeded Cohen as president in 1940. For more information concerning the organization, funding, and management of the Conference, see Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, Ch. 27 and Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, Ch. XIII.

71. Oscar Janowsky and Melvin M. Fagen, International Aspects of German Racial Policies, Intro. by Morris R. Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937).

72. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 244.

73. Oscar I. Janowsky, People at Bay: The Jewish Problem in East Central Europe, Preface by Morris R. Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938).

74. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 244

75. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 226.

76. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 245.

77. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 226.

78. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 243.

79. The early sponsors of the Jewish Occupational Council included the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the ORT, B'nai B'rith, Hias, the Jewish Agricultural Society, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Jewish Welfare Board, the National Refugee Service, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. See Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 249.

80. Ibid., 350.

81. Morris R. Cohen, "Philosophies of Jewish History," Jewish Social Studies, I (1939), pp. 39-72. Reprinted in Cohen, Reflections of a Wandering Jew, pp. 53-86.

82. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 443.

83. Cohen, A Dreamer's Journey, p. 252.

84. Ibid., 254.

85. Ibid., 257.

86. These lectures were eventually published in a single volume: Morris R. Cohen, The Meaning of Human History (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1947).

87. Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 152.

88. Cohen, The Meaning of Human History, p. 296.

89. Levi M. Olan, American Jewish Archives (Jan. 1953), p. 37. Quoted in Rosenfield, Portrait of a Philosopher, p. 238.

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