

ports can be buried by a "Departmental Committee." From Pocock's evidence, Haggard was tricked in this way three times between 1906 and 1918. By the end of his life he was able to concede that very few people actively wished to return to the land.

Mr. Pocock judges that, had his education not been stunted by his father, Haggard might have been a "successful colonial administrator, lawyer or soldier" (p. 94). The picture which he paints is of an unworldly man, not skilled in practical action. Haggard loved the idea of armed combat without having engaged in it; his appearance indicates a man around whom glamour hovered like a mist: "he was described . . . when dining at the Garrick Club . . . as having "a cavalry face and the jangle of imaginary spurs" (p. 91). He certainly could never have been a colonial administrator. Pocock is good on the subject of Haggard's friendship with Rudyard Kipling, and also on that of the humility from which his histrionics perhaps sprang. Pocock can plod, but the current alternative to such realism is the Lacanian scholarship responsible for the Introduction and Notes to the Oxford University Press's edition of *She*.

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Beyond the New Right: Markets, Government and the Common Environment by John Gray (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

This is a difficult book to comment on for two reasons. The author, a Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, and a leading English New Right theorist, has assembled, apparently unchanged, three previously-published papers together with one published here for the first time. Yet his thought has clearly changed between the first paper and the last, and thus there is some lack of harmony, and even a few direct contradictions between the views expressed in the different papers. Consequently one must assume that the last chapter represents Gray's final views about those topics which are addressed within it. Yet about the earlier papers, is a reviewer justified in guessing that some of the opinions expressed in them have also changed, where they seem out of harmony with what the author says in the last chapter, even if the subjects are not directly mentioned there? In the second place, there seem two very different ways one could approach this book. In it there are unquestionably many insights about society and the role of government, numerous valid criticisms of both liberalism as well as of neo-conservatism, quite a number of excellent suggestions about environmental matters. Nevertheless I do not think that the philosophical vision or framework within which these proposals are situated could

entirely commend itself to Catholics and to others who appreciate the insights of G.K. Chesterton and like thinkers. Therefore one hesitates between emphasising the strengths of many of the particular policies that are suggested or pointing out the very real limits of Gray's thinking and the errors or real evils that he sometimes advocates. With this in mind, then, let me begin.

The first essay, "Limited Government," originally published in 1989, has as its task the prescribing in some detail of correct governmental functions in such areas as welfare, taxation, education policy and health care, together with criticism, sometimes severe, of standard neo-conservative or Thatcherite policies. The essay, though, is clearly rooted in New Right thought. Usually it seems that Gray finds fault with neo-conservative or libertarian *methods* or proposals, not so much with their ends. He is well aware, for example, that economic policy is not implemented in a vacuum. Thus the state of the surrounding culture must be of concern to government, but *for the sake of the market*. He is also not afraid to consider radical policy changes—whether the privatisation of the issuing of money or a sweeping reform of welfare. But although he espouses some interesting ideas on many currently vexing socio-political questions, the entire essay pre-supposes the free-market tradition of liberal individualism. But this tradition, the tradition of Western liberalism, from its inception as an attack on Medieval Christian economic morality to its present-day assault on the family and the human person, has always assumed an a-social individualism. And Gray likewise assumes this. He writes: "The most fundamental argument for market freedom is in its . . . positively enabling people to act in pursuit of their goals and to express their values and ideals" (pp. 14-15). Though such an arrangement is more attractive than totalitarian brutality, it hardly accords with the classical or Christian notion of man or of the human community.

Gray, however, is not explicit about the philosophy of man underlying his work. In fact, he claims to eschew the grand approach to political theory, what he calls "a universal doctrine"—a theory from which everything else can be deduced and applied regardless of particular conditions. "Time, place and historical circumstances are of crucial importance in determining the range and character of intervention by the state in civil society" (p. 5). Most of us can appreciate this wise restraint, yet is it enough? For without an understanding of what man is, that is, without a philosophy of man, it is impossible to come up with any arrangement for governing or nourishing a social order. Is man a complicated computer or a free rational animal? Do all men share a common human nature or not? Gray, however, denies that a political philosophy must be "grounded in immutable principles" (p. 47). But if one has no first principles, how does one know how to apply correctly "Time, place and historical circumstance"? One would seem to need *something* to apply them to, something which these factors would modify. Gray is here reacting against

such grand schemes as Communism or Enlightenment classical liberalism, philosophies which promote a theory that claims to explain everything with a few simple principles. But although one may pretend to do without philosophy, actually it is impossible to do so, for either one will be aware of what his philosophical principles are or those principles will operate covertly. In the first essay, at least, Gray's favourite political philosophers are Thomas Hobbes and David Hume; and there is no doubt but that the materialism and empiricism of both these thinkers influenced their political doctrines. Anyone attracted to these philosophers already has a considerable stock of "immutable principles" even if he does not recognise them as such.

In the second essay, "A Conservative Disposition: Individualism, the Free Market and the Common Life," and in the third, "The Moral Foundations of Market Institutions," Gray revisits many of the same themes and policy recommendations of the first essay. In all of them, he is at pains to criticise the theories both of the libertarians and of the social democratic egalitarians and to distance himself from their proposals. For example, he distinguishes the "individualism that is favoured by a conservative . . . from that sponsored by liberalism and libertarianism" (p. 55). Yet it seems that he is still wedded to classical liberal ideas, since later in the same chapter he writes: "It is possible to go further in extending the reach of the free market, if at the same time measures are devised to renew the physical and institutional environment that confers legitimacy on it" (p. 60). Though it may be that in advocating "the free market" Gray is primarily reacting against socialist and other centrally-planned economies, yet he ought to be aware that there are forms of private-property based economic systems which lack central planning, and yet which cannot be characterised as having a free market in the usual sense of that term. Certainly the Distributism of Chesterton and of Belloc would belong in such a category.

In the third essay, Gray begins to move more decisively away from his New Right background. He suggests, for example, the German social market economy, suitably adapted to British needs, as the best kind of economic arrangement. His proposals for the reform of welfare are carefully thought out and certainly deserve study. Yet, throughout this entire chapter he promotes what he calls "autonomy,"—both as pre-condition and goal of the kind of society he is looking for. And in the midst of this, he also writes that legal abortion should be retained and that "Dutch policy on euthanasia merits careful study" (p. 106). More of his thought on such things later. Certain themes and issues run throughout the entire book, especially the first three essays. The market is certainly the most important of these. In the first chapter, he seems to regard the market as that for the sake of which all else is done; but later he shifts from this position, and argues that the free market is a necessary means, for other desirable ends, particularly for "human autonomy," which is a major

theme of the third chapter. And even as late as the end of the third essay, his praise of the market seems to place it not *within* a community containing many other institutions and practices of equal or greater importance, but as in a class by itself (pp. 122-123). Gray likewise is very concerned with the culture on which the market depends. He realises, for example, that if the citizens are ill-educated, in poor health, living in crime-infested or environmentally degraded areas, it is absurd to propose the free market as the solution to their problems, since such people lack the necessary cultural supports that make a functioning free market possible. But it is only in the third and fourth essays that the culture becomes the end with the market as a means, rather than the other way around.

One thing about Gray's discussion of economic alternatives that is disappointing is that he confines his discussion to proposals that have been widely discussed or advocated in Britain. Thus he spends many pages attacking central planning and market socialism. He does not consider something such as Distributism to be a "live option," despite quotations from both Chesterton and Belloc. And since he does not say what he means by a market, it was not clear to me whether or not he would consider the society sketched in Belloc's *The Restoration of Property*, for example, as having a market economy. Is the market any exchange of goods or services, or does it imply a situation in which the exchange itself sets the prices of goods and labour simply by each participant seeking his own individual welfare? Thus, among the many policy prescriptions of the author, such as welfare reform by carefully targeted vouchers for special cases—as in disability, old-age pensions or child support; abolition of most public schools; vastly lowered taxation; making the British National Health Service and old-age pension system voluntary; privatisation of the issuing of money, we find some sensible, some worth considering, and some foolish. But what is back of this group of suggestions? What vision of man and of society inspires them? Gray explicitly rejects the need for a religious underpinning for his conservative philosophy (p. 49); and, as I noted above, he rejects the need to ground his prescriptions for society in a rigorously argued philosophy of man. But despite this failure, one can see that there *are* philosophical principles underlying his thought; and unfortunately these principles are simply those of modern Western liberal secularism. It is true that he often tempers their application with restraint and common sense; but, nonetheless, whether in the free-market capitalist atmosphere of the first three essays, or in the Gaian atmosphere of the last, one does not see any *ultimate* truths about man that transcend the current Western consensus.

The final essay, "An Agenda for Green Conservatism," is in many ways the most interesting. Its burden is that "many of the central conceptions of traditional conservatism have a natural congruence with Green concerns" (p. 124); and, in this essay, Gray moves furthest from his New Right roots. He ar-

gues for many sensible ideas, including widespread property ownership, the importance of preserving traditional sustainable farming by protecting it from the competition of a worldwide market, the inclusion of what we call alternative medicine within a government health-care system and the preservation and rejuvenation of historic European cities, in part by restricting the use of private motor cars within them. He speaks eloquently of the absurdity of the nearly universal expectation that a continuous rise in our living standards is the justification and sole mission of our society. Gray considers population growth to be the greatest threat to "the integrity of our common environment." And certainly unlimited future population growth could at some time bring about a very difficult situation. Yet no Catholic could ever acquiesce in Gray's acceptance of abortion and euthanasia as necessary means for curbing population growth. And by the latter, he means more than simply refusing extraordinary treatment; he includes "physician-assisted" suicide (p. 171).

Yet perhaps even more troubling is Gray's espousal of the so-called Gaia hypothesis, "the idea of life on the Earth as constituting a single organism" (p. 138). The amount of immorality that this proposal logically leads to is immense. For just as one cuts away parts of one's body that are diseased or growing uncontrollably, as for example a cancer, so one could easily argue that those nations with high population growth are to be treated in a similar manner. No longer are individual men, those ordinary people drinking their beer in a pub, about whom Chesterton wrote and cared so much—no longer are such individuals to be the focus of public policy; now it is mankind as a whole, mankind in the abstract, toward whose welfare we direct our proposals, and ordinary people can be lopped off as one would lop off a diseased limb or tumor. And doubtless it is more likely an Oxford don will be among the ones doing the "lopping" rather than the ones being "lopped." For myself, if the only way that human life on the earth can be preserved is by abortion and euthanasia, than I prefer to perish amid great multitudes of those for whom Christ died. One recalls Newman's dictum that it is better for the entire world to die amid great agony than for one single sin to be committed.

This book, then, though containing some sound proposals and suggestions, does not present a worthwhile vision of man or of society. Neither the basically free-market atmosphere of the first three chapters nor the Gaian one of the last chapters offer a vision that will aid in restoring the social health of the world.

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