VALUES

We have come back to the point where we began, where *values* take the place of good and evil. But now we have made at least a hasty tour of the intellectual experiences connected with modern politics that made such a response compelling. How it looked to thoughtful Germans is most revealingly expressed in a famous passage by Max Weber, about God, science and the irrational:

> Finally, although a naive optimism may have celebrated science—that is, the technique of the mastery of life founded on science—as the path which would lead to happiness, I believe I can leave this entire question aside in light of the annihilating critique which Nietzsche has made of "the last men" who "have discovered happiness." Who, then, still believes in this, with the exception of a few big babies in university chairs or in editorial offices? *(Science as a Vocation)*

So penetrating and well informed an observer as Weber could say in 1919 that the scientific spirit at the heart of Western democracy was dead for all serious men and that Nietzsche had killed it, or had at least given it the *coup de grâce.* The presentation of "the last man" in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was so decisive that the old-style Enlightenment rationalism need not even be discussed anymore; and, Weber implies, all future discussion or study must proceed with the certainty that the perspective was a "naive" failure. Reason cannot establish values, and its belief that it can is the stupidest and most pernicious illusion.

This means, simply, that almost all Americans at that time, thinking Americans in particular, were "big babies" and remained so, long after the Continent had grown up. One need only think of John Dewey to recognize that he fits Weber's description to a T, and then remember what his influence here once was. And not only Dewey, but everyone from the beginning of our regime, especially those who said, "We hold these *truths* to be *self-evident*," shared the rationalist dream. Weber's statement is so important because he as much as or more than anyone brought us into contact with the most advanced Continental criticisms of liberal democracy, and was the intermediary between Nietzsche and us Americans who were the most recalcitrant to his insight, perhaps because according to it we represent the worst or most hopeless and are therefore loath to see ourselves in that mirror. A very dark view of the future has been superimposed on our incorrigible optimism. We are children playing with adult toys. They have proved too much for us to handle. But, in our defense, we are probably not the only ones for whom they are too much.

Weber points us toward Nietzsche as the common source for serious thinkers of the twentieth century. He also tells us what the single fundamental issue is: the relation between reason, or science, and the human good. When he speaks of happiness and the last man, he does not mean that the last man is unhappy, but that his happiness is nauseating. An experience of profound contempt is necessary in order to grasp our situation, and our capacity for contempt is vanishing. Weber's science presupposes this experience, which we would call subjective. After having encountered it in Nietzsche, he spent the greater part of his scholarly life studying religion in order to understand the noncontemptible, those who esteem or revere and are therefore not self-satisfied, those who have values or, to say the same thing, have gods, in particular those who create gods or found religions. From Nietzsche he learned that religion, or the sacred, is the most important human phenomenon, and his further study of it was made from Nietzsche's unorthodox perspective.

"God is dead," Nietzsche proclaimed. But he did not say this on a note of triumph, in the style of earlier atheism—the tyrant has been overthrown and man is now free. Rather he said it in the anguished tones of the most powerful and delicate piety deprived of its proper object. Man, who loved and needed God, has lost his Father and Savior without possibility of resurrection. The joy of liberation one finds in Marx has turned into terror at man's unprotectedness. *Honesty* compels serious men, on

examination of their consciences, to admit that the old faith is no longer compelling. It is the very peak of Christian virtue that demands the sacrifice of Christianity, the greatest sacrifice a Christian can make. Enlightenment killed God; but like Macbeth, the men of the Enlightenment did not know that the cosmos would rebel at the deed, and the world become "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Nietzsche replaces easygoing or self-satisfied atheism with agonized atheism, suffering its human consequences. Longing to believe, along with intransigent refusal to satisfy that longing, is, according to him, the profound response to our entire spiritual condition. Marx denied the existence of God but turned over all His functions to History, which is inevitably directed to a goal fulfilling of man and which takes the place of Providence. One might as well be a Christian if one is so naive. Prior to Nietzsche, all those who taught that man is a historical being presented his history as in one way or another progressive. After Nietzsche, a characteristic formula for describing our history is "the decline of the West."

Nietzsche surveyed and summed up the contradictory strands of modern thought and concluded that victorious rationalism is unable to rule in culture or soul, that it cannot defend itself theoretically and that its human consequences are intolerable. This constitutes a crisis of the West, for everywhere in the West, for the first time ever, all regimes are founded on reason. Human founders, looking only to universal principles of natural justice recognizable by all men through their unaided reason, established governments on the basis of the consent of the governed, without appeal to revelation or tradition. But reason has also discerned that all previous cultures were founded by and on gods or belief in gods. Only if the new regimes are enormous successes, able to rival the creative genius and splendor of other cultures, could reason's rational foundings be equal or superior to the kinds of foundings that reason knows were made elsewhere. But such equality or superiority is highly questionable; therefore reason recognizes its own inadequacy. There must be religion, and reason cannot found religions.

This was already implicit in the first wave of criticism of Enlightenment. Rousseau said a civil religion is necessary to society, and the legislator has to appear draped in the colors of religion. Tocqueville concentrated on the centrality of religion to America. With the failure of Robespierre's kind of civil religion, there was a continuing effort to promote a revised or liberal Christianity, inspired by Rousseau's *Profes-*

sion of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar. The very idea of culture was a way of preserving something like religion without talking about it. Culture is a synthesis of reason and religion, attempting to hide the sharp distinction between the two poles.

Nietzsche examines the patient, observes that the treatment was not successful, and pronounces God dead. Now there cannot be religion; but inasmuch as man needs culture, the religious impulse remains. No religion but religiosity. This suffuses Nietzsche's analysis of modernity, and, unnoticed, it underlies the contemporary categories of psychology and sociology. He brought the religious question back to the center of philosophy. The critical standpoint from which to view modern culture is its essential atheism; and that more repulsive successor of the bourgeois, the *last man,* is the product of egalitarian, rationalist, socialist atheism.

Thus the novel aspect of the crisis of the West is that it is identical with a crisis of philosophy. Reading Thucydides shows us that the decline of Greece was purely political, that what we call intellectual history is of little importance for understanding it. Old regimes had traditional roots; but philosophy and science took over as rulers in modernity, and purely theoretical problems have decisive political effects. One cannot imagine modern political history without a discussion of Locke, Rousseau and Marx. Theoretical implausibility and decrepitude are, as everyone knows, at the heart of the Soviet Union's malaise. And the Free World is not far behind. Nietzsche is the profoundest, clearest, most powerful diagnostician of the disease. He argues that there is an inner necessity for us to abandon reason on rational grounds—that therefore our regime is doomed.

The *disenchantment* of God and nature necessitated a new description of good and evil. To adapt a formula of Plato about the gods, we do not love a thing because it is good, it is good because we love it. It is our *decision* to esteem that makes something estimable. Man is the esteeming being, the one capable of reverence and self-contempt, "the beast with red cheeks." Nietzsche claimed to have seen that the objects of men's reverence in no sense compel that reverence; frequently the objects do not even exist. Their qualities are projections of what is most powerful in man and serve to satisfy his strongest needs or desires. Good and evil are what make it possible for men to live and act. The character of their judgments of good and evil shows what they are.

To put it simply, Nietzsche says that modern man is losing, or has

lost, the capacity to value, and therewith his humanity. Self-satisfaction, the desire to be adjusted, the comfortable solution to his problems, the whole program of the welfare state, are the signs of the incapacity to look up toward the heaven of man's possible perfection or self-overcoming. But the surest sign is the way we use the word "value," and in this Nietzsche not only diagnosed the disease but exacerbated it. He intended to point out to men the danger they are in, the awesome task they face of protecting and enhancing their humanity. As he understood it, men in our current decrepitude could take it easy if they believed God, nature or history provides values. Such belief was salutary as long as the objectified creations of man were still noble and vital. But in the present exhaustion of the old values, men must be brought to the abyss, terrified by their danger and nauseated by what could become of them, in order to make them aware of their responsibility for their fate. They must turn within themselves and reconstitute the conditions of their creativity in order to generate values. The self must be a tense bow. It must struggle with opposites rather than harmonize them, rather than turn the tension over to the great instruments of last manhood—the skilled bow unbenders and Jesuits of our days, the psychiatrists, who, in the same spirit and as part of the same conspiracy of modernity as the peace virtuosos, reduce conflict. Chaos, the war of opposites, is, as we know from the Bible, the condition of creativity, which must be mastered by the creator. The self must also bring forth arrows out of its longing. Bow and arrow, both belonging to man, can shoot a star into the heavens to guide man. Stripping away the illusions about values was required, so Nietzsche thought, by our situation, to disenchant all misleading hopes of comfort or consolation, thereby to fill the few creators with awe and the awareness that everything depends on them. Nihilism is a dangerous but a necessary and a possibly salutary stage in human history. In it man faces his true situation. It can break him, reduce him to despair and spiritual or bodily suicide. But it can hearten him to a reconstruction of a world of meaning. Nietzsche's works are a glorious exhibition of the soul of a man who might, if anybody can, be called *creative.* They constitute the profoundest statement about creativity, by a man who had a burning need to understand it.

Nietzsche was ineluctably led to meditation on the coming to be of God—on God-creation—for God is the highest value, on which the

others depend. God is not creative, for God *is not.* But God as made by man reflects what man is, unbeknownst to himself. God is said to have made the world of concern to us out of nothing; so man makes something, God, out of nothing. The faith in God and the belief in miracles are closer to the truth than any scientific explanation, which has to overlook or explain away the creative in man. Moses, overpowered by the obscure drives within him, went to the peak of Sinai and brought back tables of values; these values had a necessity, a substantiality more compelling than health or wealth. They were the core of life. There are other possible tables of values—one thousand and one, according to Zarathustra—but these were the ones that made this people what it was and gave it a life-style, a unity of inner experience and outer expression or form. There is no prescription for creating the myths that constitute a people, no standardized test that can predict the man who will create them or determine which myths will work or are appropriate. There is the matter and the maker, like stone and sculptor; but in this case the sculptor is not only the efficient cause but the formal and final cause as well. There is nothing that underlies the myth, no substance, no cause. No search for the cause of values, either in the rational quest for knowledge of good and evil or in, for example, their economic determinants, can result in an accurate account of them. Only an openness to the psychological phenomena of creativity can bring any clarity.

This psychology cannot be like Freud's, which, beginning from Nietzsche's understanding of the unconscious, finds causes of creativity that blur the difference between a Raphael and a finger painter. Everything is in that difference, which necessarily escapes our science. The unconscious is a great mystery; it is the truth of God, and it—the id—is as unfathomable as was God. Freud accepted the unconscious, and then tried to give it perfect clarity by means of science. But the id produces science. It can produce many sciences. Freud's procedure is like trying to determine God's essence or nature from what he created. God could have created an infinity of worlds. If he had been limited to this one, he would not have been creative or free.

Understanding all of this is necessary if one is to understand creativity. The id is the source; it is elusive and unfathomable and produces world interpretations. Yet natural scientists, among whom Freud wished to be counted, do not take any of this seriously. Biologists cannot

even account for consciousness within their science, let alone the unconscious. So psychologists like Freud are in an impossible halfway house between science, which does not admit the existence of the phenomena he wishes to explain, and the unconscious, which is outside the jurisdiction of science. It is a choice, so Nietzsche compellingly insists, between science and psychology. Psychology is by that very fact the winner, since science is the product of the psyche. Scientists themselves are gradually being affected by this choice. Perhaps science is only a product of our culture, which we know is no better than any other. Is science true? One sees a bit of decay around the edges of its good conscience, formerly so robust. Books like Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* are popular symptoms of this condition.

This is where what I called the bottomless or fathomless self, the last version of the *self,* makes its appearance. Id, Nietzsche named it. The id mocks the ego when a man says, "*It* occurred to me." The sovereign consciousness waits on something down below, which sends up its food for thought. The difference between this version and the others is that they began from a common experience, more or less immediately accessible, that all men share, which establishes, if only intersubjectively, a common humanity that can be called human nature. Fear of violent death and desire for comfortable self-preservation were the first stop on the way down. Everybody knows them, and we can recognize one another in them. The next stop was the sweet sentiment of existence, no longer immediately accessible to civilized man but recoverable by him. When under its spell, we can with certainty say to ourselves, "This is what I really am, what I live for," with the further conviction that the same must be so for all other men. This, allied with a vague, generalized compassion, makes us a species and can give us guidance. At the next stop there turns out to be no stop, and the descent is breathtaking. If one finds anything at all, it is strictly one's own, what Nietzsche calls one's *fatum,* a stubborn, strong ass that has nothing to say for itself other than that it is. One finds, at best, oneself; and it is incommunicable and isolates each from all others, rather than uniting them. Only the rarest individuals find their own stopping point from which they can move the world. They are, literally, profound.

Though the values, the horizons, the tables of good and evil that originate in the self cannot be said to be true or false, cannot be derived

from the common feeling of mankind or justified by the universal standards of reason, they are not equal, contrary to what vulgar teachers of value theory believe. Nietzsche, and all those serious persons who in one way or another accepted his insight, held that inequality among men is proved by the fact that there is no common experience accessible in principle to all. Such distinctions as authentic-inauthentic, profound-superficial, creator-created replace true and false. The individual value of one man becomes the polestar for many others whose own experience provides them with no guidance. The rarest of men is the creator, and all other men need and follow him.

Authentic values are those by which a life can be lived, which can form a people that produces great deeds and thoughts. Moses, Jesus, Homer, Buddha: these are the creators, the men who formed horizons, the founders of Jewish, Christian, Greek, Chinese, and Japanese culture. It *is* not the truth of their thought that distinguished them, but its capacity to generate culture. A value is only a value if it is life-preserving and life-enhancing. The quasi-totality of men's values consists of more or less pale carbon copies of the originator's values. Egalitarianism means conformism, because it gives power to the sterile who can only make use of old values, other men's ready-made values, which are not alive and to which their promoters are not *committed.* Egalitarianism is founded on reason, which denies creativity. Everything in Nietzsche is an attack on rational egalitarianism, and shows what twaddle the habitual talk about values is these days—and how astonishing is Nietzsche's respectability on the Left.

Since values are not rational and not grounded in the natures of those subject to them, they must be imposed. They must defeat opposing values. Rational persuasion cannot make them believed, so struggle is necessary. Producing values and believing in them are acts of the will. Lack of will, not lack of understanding, becomes the crucial defect. *Commitment* is *the* moral virtue because it indicates the seriousness of the agent. Commitment is the equivalent of faith when the living God has been supplanted by self-provided values. It is Pascal's wager, no longer on God's existence but on one's capacity to believe in oneself and the goals one has set for oneself. Commitment values the values and makes them valuable. Not love of truth but *intellectual honesty* characterizes the proper state of mind. Since there is no truth in the values, and what truth there is about life is not lovable, the hallmark of the *authentic self* is

consulting one's oracle while facing up to what one is and what one experiences. *Decisions,* not deliberations, are the movers of deeds. One cannot know or plan the future. One must will it. There is no program. The great revolutionary must destroy the past and open up the future for the free play of creativity. Politics are revolutionary; but unlike the Glorious Revolution, the American Revolution, the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution, the new revolutions should be unprogrammatic. They are to be made by intellectually honest, committed, strong-willed, creative men. Nietzsche was not a fascist; but this project inspired fascist rhetoric, which looked to the revitalization of old cultures or the foundation of new ones, as opposed to the rational, rootless cosmopolitanism of the revolutions of the Left.

Nietzsche was a cultural relativist, and he saw what that means—war, great cruelty rather than great compassion. War is the fundamental phenomenon on which peace can sometimes be forced, but always in the most precarious way. Liberal democracies do not fight wars with one another because they see the same human nature and the same rights applicable everywhere and to everyone. Cultures fight wars with one another. They must do so because values can only be asserted or posited by overcoming others, not by reasoning with them. Cultures have different *perceptions,* which determine what the world is. They cannot come to terms. There is no communication about the highest things. (Communication is the substitute for understanding when there is no common world men share, to which they can refer when they misunderstand one another. From the isolation of the closed systems of self and culture, there are attempts to "get in contact," and "failures of communication." How individuals and cultures can "relate" to one another is altogether a mysterious business.) Culture means a war against chaos *and* a war against other cultures. The very idea of culture carries with it a value: man needs culture and must do what is necessary to create and maintain cultures. There is no place for a theoretical man to stand. To live, to have any inner substance, a man must have values, must be committed, or *engagé.* Therefore a cultural relativist must care for culture more than truth, and fight for culture while knowing it is not true.

This is somehow impossible, and Nietzsche struggled with the problem throughout his career, perhaps without a satisfactory resolution. But he knew that the scientific view is deadly to culture, and that the political

or moral cultural relativist of the ordinary sort is doomed to have no culture. Cultural relativism, as opposed to relativism simply, teaches the need to believe while undermining belief.

Nietzsche appears to have taken over the idea of culture from his philosophical predecessors without much hesitation. Culture is, from his point of view, the only framework within which to account for what is specifically human in man. Man is pure becoming, unlike any other being in nature; and it is in culture that he becomes something that transcends nature and has no other mode of existence and no other support than a particular culture. The actuality of plants and the other animals is contained in their potentialities; but this is not true of man, as is indicated by the many cultural flowers, essentially unlike, produced from the same seed, man. Nietzsche's contribution was to draw with perfect intransigence the consequences of that idea and try to live with them. If there are many cultures, unsolicited by one perfect or complete culture in which man is man, simply—without prefix such as Greek, Chinese, Christian, Buddhist (i.e., if Plato's *Republic,* outlining the one best regime, is simply a myth, a work of Plato's imagination), then the very word "man" is a paradox. There are as many kinds of man as there are cultures, without any perspective from which man can be spoken of in the singular. This is true not only of his habits, customs, rituals, fashions, but above all of his mind. There must be as many different kinds of mind as there are cultures. If the mind itself is not included among the things that are relative to cultures, the observations of cultural relativism are trivial and have always been accepted. Yet everyone likes cultural relativism but wants to exempt what concerns him. The physicist wants to save his atoms; the historian, his events; the moralist, his values. But they are all equally relative. If there is an escape for one truth from the flux, then there is in principle no reason why many truths are not beyond it; and then the flux, becoming, change, history or what have you is not what is fundamental, but rather, being, the immutable principle of science and philosophy.

It is Nietzsche's merit that he was aware that to philosophize is radically problematic in the cultural, historicist dispensation. He recognized the terrible intellectual and moral risks involved. At the center of his every thought was the question "How is it possible to do what I am doing?" He tried to apply to his own thought the teachings of cultural relativism. This practically nobody else does. For example, Freud says that

men are motivated by desire for sex and power, but he did not apply those motives to explain his own science or his own scientific activity. But if he can be a true scientist, i.e., motivated by love of the truth, so can other men, and his description of their motives is thus mortally flawed. Or if he is motivated by sex or power, he is not a scientist, and his science is only one means among many possible to attain those ends. This contradiction runs throughout the natural and social sciences. They give an account of things that cannot possibly explain the conduct of their practitioners. The highly ethical economist who speaks only about gain, the public-spirited political scientist who sees only group interest, the physicist who signs petitions in favor of freedom while recognizing only unfreedom—mathematical law governing moved matter—in the universe are symptomatic of the difficulty of providing a self-explanation for science and a ground for the theoretical life, which has dogged the life of the mind since early modernity but has become particularly acute with cultural relativism. Nietzsche, in response to this difficulty, self-consciously made dangerous experiments with his own philosophy, treating its source as the will to power instead of the will to truth.

Nietzsche's new beginning in philosophy starts from the observation that a shared sense of the *sacred* is the surest way to recognize a culture, and the key to understanding it and all of its facets. Hegel made this clear in his philosophy of history, and he had found the same awareness in Herodotus' studies of various peoples, Greek and barbarian. What a people bows before tells us what it is. But Hegel made a mistake; he believed there could be a thoroughly rational God, one who conciliated the demands of culture and those of science. Yet somehow he also saw that this was not so when he said that the owl of Minerva flies at dusk, meaning that only when a culture is over can it be understood. Hegel's moment of understanding of the West coincided with its end. The West had been demythologized and had lost its power to inspire and its view of the future. Therefore, it is evident that its myths are what animates a culture, and the makers of myths are the makers of cultures and of man. They are superior to philosophers, who only study and analyze what the poets make. Hegel admits that poetry has lost its prophetic power but consoles himself with the belief that philosophy will suffice.

The artists whom Nietzsche saw around him, those whose gifts were the greatest, attested to this loss. They were what he called decadents, not

because they lacked talent or their art was not impressive, but because their works were laments of artistic impotence, characterizations of an ugly world that the poets believe they cannot influence. Immediately after the French Revolution there had been a stupendous artistic effervescence, and poets thought they could again be the legislators of mankind. The vocation provided for the artists in the new philosophy of culture heartened them, and a new classic age was born. Idealism and romanticism appeared to have carved out a place for the sublime in the order of things. But within a generation or two the mood had noticeably soured, and artists began to represent the romantic visions as a groundless hoax. Men like Baudelaire and Flaubert turned away from the public and made the moralism and romantic enthusiasm of their immediate predecessors look foolish. Adulteries without love, sins without punishment or redemption became the more authentic themes of art. The world had been disenchanted. Baudelaire presented sinning man as in the Christian vision, but without hope of God's salvation, piercing pious fraudulence, *hypocrite lecteur.* And Flaubert drowned in a venomous hatred of the bourgeoisie, which had conquered. Culture was just fodder for its vanity. The great dualisms had collapsed; and art, creativity and freedom had been swallowed up by determinism and petty self-interest. In his greatest creation, M. Homais, the pharmacist, Flaubert encapsulated everything that modernity was and is to be. Homais represents the spirit of science, progress, liberalism, anticlericalism. He lives carefully with an eye to health. His education contains the best that has been thought and said. He knows everything that ever happened. He knows that Christianity helped to free the slaves, but that it has outlived its historical usefulness. History existed to produce him, the man without prejudices. He is at home with everything, and nothing is beyond his grasp. He is a journalist, disseminating knowledge for the enlightenment of the masses. Compassion is his moral theme. And all this is nothing but petty *amour-propre.* Society exists to give him honor and self-esteem. Culture is his. There are no proper heroes to depict nor audiences to inspire. They are all one way or another in business. Emma Bovary is Homais' foil. She can only dream of a world and men who do not and cannot exist. In this sober world she is nothing but a fool. She, like the modern artist, is pure longing with no possible goal. Her only triumph and her only free act is suicide.

Nietzsche finds these decadents, pessimists or protonihilists revela-

tory, as he does the fakers of great deeds and passions who are the reverse side of the coin, in particular Wagner. He has contempt for the former, not because they lack honesty or because their characterization of the world around them is inaccurate, but because they know that once there were gods and heroes and that they were the products of poetic imagination—which means that poetic imagination can make them again—yet do not have the courage or the resolve themselves to create. Therefore they are hopeless. They alone can still long; but they are secret believers in the Christian God or, at least, in the Christian *worldview* and cannot believe in the really new. They are afraid to set sail on stormy, uncharted seas. Only Dostoyevski has a vitality of soul, proof against decadence. His unconscious, filtered through a Christian conscience, expresses itself in forbidden desires, crimes, acts of self-abasement, sentimentality and brutality; but he is alive and struggling and proves the continuing health of the animal and all that is in ferment down under.

The artist is the most interesting of all phenomena, for he represents creativity, the definition of man. His unconscious is full of monsters and dreams. It provides the pictures to consciousness, which takes them as given and as "world," and *rationalizes* them. Rationality is only the activity of providing good reasons for what has no reason or is unreasonable. We do what we do out of a fate that is our individuality, but we have to explain and communicate. This latter is the function of consciousness; and when it has been provided with a rich store by the unconscious, its activity is fruitful, and the illusion of its sufficiency is even salutary. But when it has chopped up and chewed over its inheritance, as mathematical physics has now done, there are not enough nourishing plants left whole. Consciousness now requires replenishment.

Thus Nietzsche opened up the great terrain explored by modern artists, psychologists and anthropologists, searching for refreshment for our exhausted culture in the depths of the darkest unconscious or darkest Africa. Not all that Nietzsche asserted is plausible, but its charm is undeniable. He went to the end of the road with Rousseau, and beyond. The side of modernity that is less interesting to Americans, which seeks less for political solutions than for understanding and satisfaction of man in his fullness or completeness, finds its profoundest statement in Nietzsche, who represents the culmination of that second state of nature. Above all he was a friend of artists, who were the first to recognize him

when he was disreputable among academics; and among them his influence was clearly most fertile. One need only think of Rilke, Yeats, Proust and Joyce. The greatest philosophic tribute to him is Heidegger's book *Nietzsche*, the most important part of which is entitled "The Will to Power as Art."

Nietzsche restored something like the soul to our understanding of man by providing a supplement to the flat, dry screen of consciousness, which with pure intellect looks at the rest of man as something alien, a bundle of affects of matter, like any other object of physics, chemistry and biology. The unconscious replaces all the irrational things—above all divine madness and eros—which were part of the old soul and had lost significance in modernity. It provides a link between consciousness and nature as a whole, restoring therewith the unity of man. Nietzsche made psychology, as the most important study, possible again; and everything of interest in psychology during the last century—not only psychoanalysis but also Gestalt, phenomenology, and existentialism—took place within the confines of the spiritual continent he discovered. But the difference between the self and the soul remains great because of the change in the status of reason. The reconstitution of man in Nietzsche required the sacrifice of reason, which Enlightenment, whatever its failings, kept at the center. For all the charms of Nietzsche and all that he says to hearten a lover of the soul, he is further away from Plato in this crucial respect than was Descartes or Locke.

Nietzsche's psychology concerns the impulse toward God, for in that impulse the self arrays and displays all its powers; and his influence brought a new burst of religious interest, if not religion, to the intellectual world. God is myth, Nietzsche taught. Myths are made by poets. This is just what Plato says in the *Republic*, and for him it is equivalent to a declaration of war between philosophy and poetry. The aim of philosophy is to substitute truth for myth (which by its very definition is falsehood, a fact too often forgotten in our post-Nietzschean fascination with myth). Since myths are there first and give men their first opinions, philosophy means a critical destruction of myth in favor of truth for the sake of freedom and living naturally. Socrates, as depicted in the Platonic dialogues, questioning and confuting the received opinions, is the model of the philosophic life; and his death at the hands of his countrymen for not believing in their myths epitomizes the risks of philosophy. Nietzsche

drew precisely the opposite conclusion from the same facts about myth. There is no nature and no such freedom. The philosopher must do the contrary of what Socrates did. So Nietzsche is the first philosopher ever to have attacked Socrates, because Socrates' life is not the model life, but a corrupt and monstrous one lacking in all nobility. The tragic life, which Socrates defused and purged, is the serious life. The new philosopher is the ally of the poets and their savior, or philosophy is itself the highest kind of poetry. Philosophy in the old mode *demythologizes* and *demystifies.* It has no sense of the sacred; and by *disenchanting* the world and *uprooting* man, it leads into a void. The revelation that philosophy finds nothingness at the end of its quest informs the new philosopher that mythmaking must be his central concern in order to make a world.

The transfusion of this religious mythmaking or value-positing interpretation of social and political experience into the American bloodstream was in large measure effected by Max Weber's language. His success here is, I am tempted to say, miraculous. A good example is his invention, the Protestant Ethic. I read his book of that name in my first social-science course at the University of Chicago when I was being initiated into the modern mysteries. This course was a survey of social-science "classics," among which was also Marx—not only the *Communist Manifesto* but also goodly chunks of *Capital.* Of course, neither Locke nor Smith, the official spokesmen for "capitalism," who might very well even be considered its founders, was on the list, because we were dealing with thinkers whom a contemporary social scientist could take seriously. Marx explained the emergence of capitalism as a historical necessity, in no one's control, the result of class conflict over material property relations. For him Protestantism was just an ideology reflecting capitalist control of the means of production. I did not see, and I am not sure that my teachers saw, that, if Weber was right, Marx—his economics and his revolution, in short, Marxism and the kinds of moral sympathies it inevitably engenders—was finished. Weber purported to demonstrate that there was no such material necessity, that men's "worldviews" or "values" determine their history, spirit compelling matter rather than the other way around. This has the effect of restoring the older view that individual men count for something, that there is human freedom and the need for leadership. Weber said it was Calvin's *charisma* and the vision allied to it, routinized by his followers, that was decisive for the development of capitalism. But how different

Weber's charismatic leader is from the rational statesmen looked to by Locke, Montesquieu, Smith and the *Federalist*. They strive for ends grasped by reason and self-evidently grounded in nature. No values, no creative visions are required for them to see what all reasonable men should see—that hard work is required to have sober, secure and prosperous freedom. Marx is arguably closer to the core of their belief in that respect; although men, according to him, are in the grip of the historical process, that process itself is rational and has as its end the rational freedom of man. Man remains, somehow, the rational animal.

Weber, on the other hand, denies the rationality of the "values" posited by the Calvinists; they are "decisions," not "deliberations," imposed on a chaotic world by powerful personalities, "worldviews" or "world-interpretations" with no foundation other than the selves of the Protestants. Those "values" made the world what it was for the Protestants. They are acts that are primarily of the will, and constitute the self and the world at the same time. Such acts must be unreasonable; they are based on nothing. In a chaotic universe, reason is unreasonable because self-contradiction is inevitable. The prophet becomes the pure model of the statesman—with very radical consequences. This was something new in American social science and should have, but did not, make it clear that a new kind of causality—entirely different from that known to natural science—had entered the scene.

In spite of this, the Weberian language and the interpretation of the world it brings with it have caught on like wildfire. I have read about the Japanese Protestant ethic, the Jewish Protestant ethic. The manifest absurdity of such locutions appears to have struck some, so now "work ethic" is gradually replacing "Protestant ethic," but this is merely an adjustment and barely disguises the point of view that still remains underneath it. Those interested in the free market do not seem to recognize, when they use this language, that they are admitting that their "rational" system needs a moral supplement in order to work, and that this morality is not itself rational—or at least the choice of it is not rational, as they understand reason. Delay of gratification may make sense for the system as a whole, but is it unarguably good for the individual? Is increase of wealth self-evidently superior to poverty for a Christian? If the work ethic is just one choice among many equally valid choices, then the free-market system itself is also just one choice among many. So proponents of the free

market should not be surprised when they see that what was once generally agreed upon no longer compels belief. One has to go back to Locke and Adam Smith in a serious way, not just for a set of quotes, to find *arguments* for the rational moral basis of liberal society. This they no longer do; and because they have lost the habit of reading serious philosophic books or of considering them really essential, they probably could not do so. When the liberal, or what came to be called the utilitarian, teaching became dominant, as is the case with most victorious causes, good arguments became less necessary; and the original good arguments, which were difficult, were replaced by plausible simplifications—or by nothing. The history of liberal thought since Locke and Smith has been one of almost unbroken decline in philosophic substance. When the liberal economic thought or way of life was manifestly threatened, its proponents, in order to defend it, took whatever came to hand. A religion must, it seems, be invented for the sole purpose of defending capitalism, whereas the earliest philosophers associated with it thought that religion must, at least, be weakened in order to establish it. And religion, contrary to containing capitalism's propensities, as Tocqueville thought it should do, is now intended to encourage them.

It goes without saying that Weber never for a moment considered whether Calvin might actually have had a revelation from God—which would certainly change the looks of things. Weber's atheism was dogmatic, but he was not interested in proving that Calvin was a charlatan or a madman. He rather preferred to believe in the authenticity of Calvin and other such founding figures as representing peak psychological types who can live and act in the world, who know how to take *responsibility*, who have an inner sureness or commitment. The religious experience is the thing, not God. The old quarrel between reason and revelation is a matter of indifference, because both sides were wrong, had faulty self-understandings. However, revelation teaches us what man is and needs. Men like Calvin are the value producers and hence the models for action in history. We cannot believe in the ground (God) of their experience, but that experience is critical. We are not interested in finding out how they understood themselves but rather in searching in the *self* for the mysterious substitute for their ground. We cannot have, and do not want to have, their peculiar illusions; but we do want values and commitments. The result of this atheistic religiosity is the mysterious musings and lan-

guage of Weber and many others (think of Sartre) about belief and action, which culminate in something very different from what either religious leaders or rational statesmen ever said or did. It fuses the two kinds of men, but with greater weight given to the former, to the necessity of faith and all that goes with it. The intellectual apparatus accompanying this analysis tends to obscure the alternatives to it, particularly the rational alternatives.

As a result there is a continuous skewing of the historical perspective toward religious explanations. *Secularization* is the wonderful mechanism by which religion becomes nonreligion. Marxism is secularized Christianity; so is democracy; so is utopianism; so are human rights. Everything connected with valuing must come from religion. One need not investigate anything else, because Christianity is the necessary and sufficient condition of our history. This makes it impossible to take Hobbes or Locke seriously as causes of that history, because we know that superficial reason cannot found values and that these thinkers were unconsciously transmitting the values of the Protestant ethic. Reason transmits, routinizes, normalizes; it does not create. Therefore Weber gives short shrift to the rational side of our tradition. Philosophy's claims are ignored; religious claims are revered. Dogmatic atheism culminates in the paradoxical conclusion that religion is the only thing that counts.

Out of this "worldview" issues the gaudy religious word "charisma," which has had such fateful political consequences while becoming one of the most tiresome buzzwords in America. In Chicago there is a Charisma Cleaners, and every street gang leader is called "charismatic." In America charisma is not just a description but something good that has to do with leadership. It even seems to confer an extralegal title to leadership by virtue of "something special" inhering in the leader. Although Weber was thinking of Moses and Buddha, or of Napoleon, the gang leader formally suits his definition of charisma. Weber sought to make a place in politics for things that political legalism excludes and that claim to have a title to attention although they are not founded on reason or consent—the only titles to rule in liberal democracy. It is not to be wondered at, then, that all the demagogic appetites frustrated by our constitutional system should latch on to a word that appears to legitimize and to flatter them. Moreover, democratic individualism does not officially provide much of a place for leaders in a regime where everyone is supposed to be his own

master. Charisma both justifies leaders and excuses followers. The very word gives a positive twist to rabble-rousing qualities and activities treated as negative in our constitutional tradition. And its vagueness makes it a tool for frauds and advertising men adept at manipulating images.

Charisma, as Weber knew perfectly well, is God-given grace, which confers leadership through God's sanction. In keeping with his analysis in the *Protestant Ethic*, he treats the self's value-positing as the human truth of God-given grace. His account of it appears to be merely descriptive, but it becomes prescriptive. In passages deeply influenced by Nietzsche, he analyzes the state as a relation of domination of man by man, founded on legitimate violence—that is, violence that is *considered* to be legitimate. Men inwardly accept being dominated if they have certain beliefs. There is no more foundation to legitimacy than the inner justification the dominated make to themselves in order to accept the violence of those who dominate them. These justifications are, according to Weber, of three kinds: traditional, rational, and charismatic. Some men submit because that is the way it has always been; others consent to obey competent civil servants who follow rationally established rules; and others are enchanted by the extraordinary grace of an individual. Of the three, charismatic legitimacy is the most important. No matter what conservatives may think, traditions had a beginning that was not traditional. They had a founder who was not a conservative or a traditionalist. The fundamental values informing that tradition were his creation. The tradition is the continuing half-life of the charmed moment when a happy few could live on the heights of inspiration with the creator. Tradition adjusts that inspiration to the ordinary, universal motives of man, such as greed and vanity; it routinizes the charisma. It is what it is because of that original impulse. So charisma is the condition of both the charismatic and the traditional legitimacies. It is also the splendid form of legitimacy. The rational is not informed by charisma, and the civil servants—bureaucrats—are therefore unable to make real decisions or take responsibility. They cannot, as we would say, determine the broad outlines of policy or, put more classically, establish ends. Mere competence can only serve already established goals and decide according to the established rules. It must be at least supplemented by charismatic leadership in order to be pointed in the right, or any, direction. So again charisma comes out on top. Value creation, the activity that writes the table of laws by which a people is

constituted and lives, is, as Nietzsche tells, the nut in the shell of existence.

Whatever the merit of Weber's analysis and categories, they became holy writ for hosts of intellectuals. They were, as Weber recognized, not only an academic exercise. They expressed his vision of the crisis of the twentieth century. This is a case where the alleged facts also spoke the values. The tradition-based regimes had exhausted their impulse and were on their way to extinction. The ones based on rationality were simply becoming the administration for "the last man," the intolerable negative pole. Imperative, then, was a stab at some form of charismatic leadership in order to revitalize the politics of the West. The whole undertaking rested on the assurance that Nietzsche was right that the last man is also the worst possible man, or more generally that his critique of reason was correct.

The problem with charismatic politics is that it is almost impossible to define. There may be examples of it in the past, but they are inimitable. If politics is like art styles (a thought picked up in Weber's invention of the term "life-style"), nothing can be prescribed to it beforehand. There are no fixed principles and no program of action. All that one can say is "Be yourself!"; "Be original!"; "Let go!" or something of the kind. *Charisma* is a formula for extremism and immoderation. Moreover, the leader must have followers, so there is every temptation for him to act out his role as they define it. And, finally, genuine charisma is so difficult to judge. Persuasive tests for the genuineness of the charismatic leader, whose grace comes from God, were notoriously hard to come by. The leader whose grace emanates from the much more enigmatic self proves practically impossible to test. The modern situation as diagnosed by Weber requires radical remedies, and the charismatic leader is such a prescription.

Just over the horizon, when Weber wrote, lay Hitler. He was a leader, *Führer,* who was certainly neither traditional nor rational-bureaucratic. He was the mad, horrible parody of the charismatic leader—the demagogue—hoped for by Weber. Hitler proved to the satisfaction of most, if not all, that the last man is not the worst of all; and his example should have, although it has not, turned the political imagination away from experiments in that direction. Weber was a good man of decent political instincts who would never have had anything but disgust at and contempt for Hitler. What he wanted was a moderate corrective to the

ills of German politics—about the same as De Gaulle brought to French politics. But when one ventures out into the vast spaces opened up by Nietzsche, it is hard to set limits. Measure and moderation are the real aliens there. Weber was just one of many serious persons who were affected by Nietzsche and popularized him without believing in the extremism that Nietzsche himself asserted is the result of positioning oneself beyond good and evil. The open-ended future contains many surprises, and all these followers of Nietzsche prepared the way by helping to jettison good and evil along with reason, without assurance of what the alternatives might be. Weber is of particular interest to us because he was the chosen apostle for the American promised land. It is not only the popularity of the heavily freighted language he bequeathed us that is surprising, but also the persistence among supposedly serious persons of his articulation of the political phenomena. Hitler did not cause a rethinking of politics here or in Europe. All to the contrary—it was while we were fighting him that the thought that had preceded him in Europe conquered here. That thought, which gave him at least some encouragement and did nothing to prepare us to understand him, remains dominant.

During the thirties some German Social Democrats became aware that Hitler, as well as Stalin, just would not fit Weber's terms of analysis, which they had previously used; and they began to employ "totalitarian" to describe them. Whether this is a sufficient corrective to Weber's narrowly conceived political science is questionable. But "charismatic" did indeed fit Hitler, unless charismatic necessarily means something good —a favorable value judgment. I suspect that those who abandoned Weber in this way did so because they could not face how wrong he had been, or the possibility that the thought they had embraced and propagated might have helped to support fascism. Hannah Arendt gave perhaps unconscious witness to my suggestion, in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, where she used the now celebrated phrase "the banality of evil," to describe Eichmann. It is not difficult to discern the "routinization of charisma" under this thin disguise. Hitler, then, must have been charismatic. After Hitler, everybody scurried back under the protective cover of morality, but practically no one turned to serious thought about good and evil. Otherwise our President, or the pope, for that matter, would not be talking about values.

This entire language, as I have tried to show, implies that the religious is the source of everything political, social and personal; and it still

conveys something like that. But it has done nothing to reestablish religion—which puts us in a pretty pickle. We reject by the fact of our categories the rationalism that is the basis of our way of life, without having anything to substitute for it. As the religious essence has gradually become a thin, putrid gas spread out through our whole atmosphere, it has gradually become respectable to speak of it under the marvelously portentous name *the sacred.* At the beginning of the German invasion of the United States, there was a kind of scientific contempt in universities for the uncleanness of religion. It might be studied in a scholarly way, as part of the past that we had succeeded in overcoming, but a believer was somehow benighted or ill. The new social science was supposed to take the place of morally and religiously polluted teachings just as Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, et al., had, according to the popular mythology, founded a natural science that crushed the superstitions of the Dark Ages. The Enlightenment, or Marxist, spirit still pervaded the land; and religion vs. science was equal to prejudice vs. truth. Social scientists simply did not see that their new tools were based on thought that did not accept the orthodox dichotomies, that not only were the European thinkers looking for something akin to religious actors on the political scene but that the new mind itself, or the self, had at least as much in common with Pascal's outlook as it did with that of Descartes or Locke. The sacred—as the central phenomenon of the self, unrecognizable to scientific consciousness and trampled underfoot by ignorant passers-by who had lost the religious instinct—was, from the outset of the value teaching, taken seriously by thinkers in Germany. That was because they understood what "value" really means. It has taken the softening of all convictions and the blurring of all distinctions for the sacred to be thought to be undangerous and to come into its own here.

Of course, as we use it, it has no more in common with God than does value with the Ten Commandments, commitment with faith, charisma with Moses, or life-style with Jerusalem or Athens. The sacred turns out to be a need, like food or sex; and in a well-ordered community, it must get its satisfactions like the other needs. In our earlier free-thinking enthusiasm, we tended to neglect it. A bit of ritual is a good thing; sacred space[5] along with some tradition must be provided for, as a generation

[5]Note how space—used to mean one's apartment, workshop, office or whatever—has become a trendy word.

ago culture was thought to be a useful supplement. The disproportion between what all these words really mean and what they mean to us is repulsive. We are made to believe that we have everything. Our old atheism had a better grasp of religion than does this new respect for the sacred. Atheists took religion seriously and recognized that it is a real force, costs something and requires difficult choices. These sociologists who talk so facilely about the sacred are like a man who keeps a toothless old circus lion around the house in order to experience the thrills of the jungle.