

Correspondence

Revising Revisionism

To the Editors: It is perhaps to be expected that revisionism is in a constant state of revision. Ronald Steel, who is commonly recognized as one of the chief architects of the revisionist history of the cold war ("The X Article—25 Years Later," September *Worldview*) seems to be stepping away from the doctrines of his own, direct or indirect, creation. "One need not accept the revisionist contention that U.S. foreign policy in the early postwar period sought to use the Marshall Plan to stave off a Depression at home, the atomic bomb to force the Soviets out of Eastern Europe, and the Truman Doctrine to achieve the 'break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.'" Agreed that such fantasies need not be accepted. But then Mr. Steel goes on to say: "Yet there is something inadequate in the conventional explanation that the postwar interventionist policies were designed solely to contain the Soviet military threat." Just what does Mr. Steel intend to say? It seems he wishes not to be considered so dull as to accept the "conventional explanation" nor so paranoid as to accept the revisionist conspiracy theories. The mere avoidance of dullness and paranoia, however, does not achieve lucidity.

Walter Lippmann, in whom, as I understand it, Mr. Steel has a vested interest as literary executor, is clearly the hero of the article. Steel's enthusiasm for Lippmann's critique of George Kennan would be more plausible if Mr. Steel indicated more clearly his own position with regard to, for example, Lippmann's enthusiasm for the Marshall Plan and other policies which, not so incidentally, were aimed at blocking Communist aspirations.

Mr. Steel's revising of cold war history (and now apparently also of revisionist cold war history) would be further enhanced were he more

candidly to confront some of his own monumental errors of judgment. One thinks, for example, of Mr. Steel's confidence, prior to 1968, that Eastern European Communist parties, such as that of Czechoslovakia, had nothing to fear from the Soviet Union, since they enjoyed a virtual equality with the Party of the Leninist motherland. As he picks and chooses among various "explanations of reality," one hopes that Mr. Steel will in the future nurture a healthier reverence for hard historical fact.

James Byron
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Ronald Steel Responds:

To clear the record it should be pointed out:

First, Lippmann's enthusiasm for the Marshall Plan rested precisely on the fact that it offered a way of restoring Western Europe to economic and political health without embarking on a costly and dangerous rearmament program. It was thus an alternative to the policy of military intervention inherent in Kennan's "X" article and in the Truman Doctrine. To imply that Lippmann's support of the Marshall Plan was tantamount to approval of the containment doctrine is to miss the whole point of the argument. Second, had Mr. Byron read my article on Czechoslovakia himself rather than paraphrasing another critic, as he has apparently done, he would have discovered that I never made the assertion for which he criticizes me. What I wrote at that time was that during the Dubcek period the Czechoslovakian Communist Party asserted its right to speak on matters of doctrine with equal authority to that

of the Soviet Union, which indeed it did enjoy until the Russian invasion. However I never said or implied that it had nothing to fear from the Soviet Union for taking this stand, and to say this is totally to distort what I wrote. Third, I never said that the revisionist contentions about the origins of the cold war were "fantasies." That is Mr. Byron's word. What I said was that even if one did not go all the way with the revisionists, the conventional arguments failed to explain the evidence, even as such a nonrevisionist as Lippmann pointed out in his columns at the time. The purpose of my article was simply to compare the positions of Lippmann and Kennan, not to provide an alternate theory for the origins of the cold war, as Mr. Byron so indignantly takes me to task for not doing. One can certainly disagree with my position or Lippmann's. But in his enthusiasm to make points against the revisionists, Mr. Byron ought not be so eager to distort the arguments, and he should know that gratuitous innuendos weaken rather than reinforce his critique.

Re Taiwan Independence

To the Editors: William Bueler's "Taiwan Tangle" (September *Worldview*) raises an elementary moral question in a fascinating, and finally painful, way. Perhaps he is right that there is a widespread and deep longing among the Taiwanese for continued independence from China. Perhaps one can even make the case on purely moral grounds that the U.S. has a responsibility to follow

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Dear Reader,

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prove by experimental analysis, they easily impress, and gradually eat their way into the once sacrosanct realm of religion. They have an added advantage: they are new and fashionable! Moreover, traditional standards of morality are not easy to keep. . . . The temptation to throw traditional norms overboard in favour of a more attractive, less demanding way of life is therefore great. . . ."

~ ~

"How many times has the American priest, pastor, layman or religious asked himself the following questions? Why am I here in Chile? Should I really be here? Couldn't a Chilean do what I'm doing and do it better? Am I just filling holes? What should be my effective contribution to Chile, to the people, to the social process which we are living, and in what should consist my testimony to the Gospel of

Christ? These are questions which have to be asked and have to be answered in one way or another, since upon their resolution depend the posture and orientation one assumes in relation to 'mission' and 'service.' The way one subjectively justifies his presence here is a personal matter, but it is not something that can be resolved in a vacuum. Without critical dialogue and feedback from Chilean sources such a justification is at best very inadequate and at worst objectively harmful."

The September issue of *Adentro Afuera*, a newsletter published by the Missioners' Committee on International Awareness, contains some of the "feedback" called for from Chileans "who have known and worked with U.S. religious personnel." *Adentro Afuera* may be addressed at Casilla 5497, Correo 3, Santiago.

PAMPHILUS

Correspondence

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through on the pledges, explicit and implicit, made to Taiwan over the years. But is it not the better part of morality to recognize the limitations of a situation? Surely neither China nor the U.S. nor the USSR has any "reason of state" for backing Taiwanese independence. If none of the great powers is likely to back Taiwanese independence either in the U.N. or on the high seas, is it not then irresponsible, perhaps immoral, to encourage independence aspirations?

The realities of the situation are not what we may wish; they may be formed by considerations that are wrong both morally and politically; but surely it only exacerbates the wrong to entertain illusions about what can be done. Since it is clear that the U.S. will not jeopardize its new China policy for the sake of Taiwanese independence, Mr. Bueler's energies might be better spent in seeking whatever amelioration is possible of what may be a painful transition as Taiwan is inevitably reunited with the Mainland.

L. Perry Francis

Buffalo, N.Y.

Pannenberg's Worldview

To the Editors: No doubt some readers will rejoice that there seems to be something going on in theology these days, the death of God notwithstanding. I find it not so difficult to restrain my enthusiasm. Prof. Carl Braaten ("Theology and Our Common World," September *Worldview*) heralds the breakthroughs represented by the work of Munich's Wolfhart Pannenberg in a way which is perfectly understandable to theologians, who, after all, have a very immediate reason for hoping theology has a future but which leaves at least some of us who are not theologians with severe misgivings.

The essential point, if I understand Braaten correctly, is that Pannenberg's efforts are aimed at restoring a kind of universal significance to theological language. That is, theology is not to be viewed as some sort of specialized "faith language" for people who are into the "religion" or "Christianity" thing. Further, we are told that the evidences for Christian claims are in some sense public, not dependent

upon privileged revelation but accessible to any rational being for objective examination. While many theologians might have difficulty with such an approach, I find it perfectly amenable, except why must it be called theology? Surely there is a whole range of scientific disciplines that can, at least in theory, examine the evidences pertinent even to the largest "meaning" questions about human nature, history, even metaphysics. The problem in the university is not that we lack theology's partnership but that we lack the evidences that warrant taking theology seriously as a partner.

. . . . If indeed rational inquiry can lead to the comprehensive conclusions proposed by Pannenberg, let the Pannenbergs and Braatens join those disciplines that have a better track record of rational inquiry than does theology. Braaten presents no persuasive argument for the university to burden itself with the intellectual imperialism and ecclesiastical presumptions that have traditionally accompanied theology.

Craig Doernberg

Cambridge, Mass.

To the Editors: I have just finished Mr. Braaten's "ambitious intellectual enterprise," i.e., his almost neo-Hegelian defense of Mr. Wolfhart Pannenberg's apologetic against the eclipse of the God idea in modern man's historical worldview. Within his article he confirms as orthodoxy Pannenberg's metaphysical notion of a shadowy but narrowly Christian *Weltanschauung*. Furthermore, Mr. Braaten states that Pannenberg's *Weltanschauung* is "friendly to the interests of history and truth." But is it?

Moreover, Mr. Braaten assures us that Pannenberg's mystic creation will cover up the bitter "stench of death" created by the doom and gloom philosophy of "iconoclastic existentialism," with hopeful images and scents of immortality and resurrection. But can such an illusive spirit accomplish this humane task?

Mr. Braaten seems to have overlooked other prophetic "Jobs" of our present "secular" age in order to relieve his "swollen conscience" in a world that remains too existential, too secular and much too irrational. The Tillichian notions, the Niebuhrian principles and the Buberian philosophy—all have been conveniently forgotten.

Perhaps his greatest defense of Pannenberg's *Weltanschauung* can be found in a quotation that Braaten borrows, in a somewhat romantic gesture, from Goethe's *Faust*: "Then he [i.e., modern man] has all the parts in his hand. What is missing, alas, is the connecting band." Thus all modern men, according to Mr. Braaten, are without this connecting band; we are merely beguiled "scatterbrains," microcosmic lumps of humanity lost in a macrocosmic realm of existential fatalism. In this Dark Age of irrationalism, individual "leaps of faith" are foolhardy. Only the mysterious connecting band can save our masochistic culture from committing spiritual suicide. And what, pray tell, solves our seemingly insurmountable problem? The secret connecting band is Pannenberg's neotraditional Christian *Weltanschauung*.

And just what is Pannenberg's

Weltanschauung? It seems to be a mysterious post-Hegelian spiritual "glue-all" that will bind the present day "scattered fragments of knowledge together" and prevent university students from becoming "scatterbrained" (i.e., insane? or irrational?). Moreover, it will put God back into His illusive Hegelian heaven as the prime mover of all history and the Asexual Stuff that binds us toward some purposeful end.

On the whole Mr. Braaten is a most skillful analyst and Mr. Pannenberg's brilliant theology a most enticing form.

Will Pannenberg's *Weltanschauung* theology succeed in our present "secular" age? Will the philosopher-poets of our age *turn back the clock* and be enticed by Pannenberg's "mythologic dame"? I wonder. Perhaps Chiron's words to Faust hold the answer:

'Tis curious with your mythologic dame:

The Poet takes her when he needs her name;

She grows not old, stays ever young and warm,

And of the most enticing form:

Seduced in youth, in age enamoring still,—

Enough! no time can bind the Poet's will.

Frederick Stefon

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Carl E. Braaten Responds:

The letters by Craig Doernberg and Frederick Stefon raise serious questions about my review-article on Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Basic Questions in Theology*, Vols. I & II. There are basically four issues.

1. First, there is the question of the universal significance of theology. There has been the tendency to rationalize the exclusion of theology from the university and to confine it to a seminary-ghetto, where the specialized language of faith leads a monological existence. Pannenberg will have none of that; neither will I. He teaches in a university, I in a seminary—which tries hard not to be

such a ghetto. The problem is two-fold: Faith in such isolation tends to become irrational commitment, and the university without theology tends to neglect that dimension of human discourse that concerns man ultimately and its implications for the whole range of human experience and knowledge. The presence of theology could once again help to mediate and negotiate the ongoing conversation concerning what is ultimately real, meaningful, worthwhile, liberating, humanizing, etc., so that interdisciplinary conversation would not have to be restricted to the weather and Saturday's football game.

2. Secondly, the question is raised by Doernberg whether there are any evidences for theological statements. Fair question. For if there are no evidences that count for the truth or the falsity of a theological statement then the statement falls to the ground as meaningless. Lots of zeal and commitment won't help. Pannenberg would agree: If theology indeed lacks the evidences to back up its truth-claims it forfeits its right to be included in the rational discussion carried on within the university. But what kind of evidences? Does Doernberg think of "evidences" in the sense of logical positivism, which demanded that statements be verifiable with *sole* reference to empirical data as the condition of their meaningfulness? Pannenberg concedes that theological statements cannot be verified by such empirical observations; but there is a broader concept of verification and truth appropriate to theology. (See Pannenberg's article, "The Nature of a Theological Statement," *Zygon*, March, 1972). If this is a claim worthy of inspection, would it not be useful even to Doernberg to enjoy theology as a partner in dialogue? If he is prepared to rule out theology in advance, we must assume that he has reached the last word on truth, on evidences and on verification. That would smack a little of that "imperialism" and "presumption" that he finds so odious in the allegedly traditional behavior of theology.

3. Thirdly, we may as well admit

that the lurking suspicion is that language about God has no place in the university. Yet it is just such language that theology is about. A faith statement that says something about God contains a cognitive element that it is the business of theology to investigate by a rational set of methodical procedures. Pannenberg is writing on method in theology, and so are other important theologians. I wonder if Doernberg could read, for example, Bernard Lonergan's new book, *Method in Theology* (1972), and still assert point-blank that there are no "evidences that warrant taking theology seriously as a partner." Perhaps he feels more comfortable with the notion that the idea of God is nothing but the function of a theologian's private faith and that therefore whatever is asserted with reference to God can be dismissed as an entirely fictitious idea. For Pannenberg, statements that refer to God need to be checked out by defensible methods of procedure; there is a subject matter that is open to examination; one's statements about it function as hypotheses in need of corroboration. If this proposition is debatable, it would seem to me that the place to carry on the debate is in the university.

4. Fourthly, Stefon directs his query to the idea of a *Weltanschauung*. It is not clear whether he is piqued by Pannenberg's particular worldview or galled by the suggestion that today we are in need of a universe of meaning to make sense of the particularities of what we experience and know. So Stefon uses sneer words to discredit the project, like neo-Hegelian, shadowy, mystic creation, illusive spirit, mysterious glue-all, asexual stuff, etc. Stefon does not make clear whether he disagrees with the diagnosis that modern man has lots of "the parts in his

hand" or with the prescription that calls for a "connecting band." Perhaps Stefon is frustrated with both notions. It all seems too Hegelian. But, by the way, how did he slip in the charge that I have conveniently forgotten all about Tillichian notions, Niebuhrian principles and Buberian philosophy? True, it would have been a terrible inconvenience to write about all these things in a review of Pannenberg's books. But as history goes on, they also become "parts" in need of a "connecting band." I think the three mentioned saints would want it that way.

Beyond the Anti-Institutional Mood

To the Editors: Anton C. Zijderveld's article on "The Anti-Institutional Mood" (September *Worldview*) has brought to mind the following thoughts on technology and its cultural ramifications:

First, it appears that too many of the dimensions of technological society are being approached from the wrong end of the spectrum. The emphasis on inputs, whether in terms of economic resources, historical perspectives, philosophical insights, institutional imperatives or current events, seems to be overshadowing the vital need to place more time and effort on creating new objectives, goals and value systems.

Second, technology is a phenomenon that demands its own cultural necessities—therefore a projection in terms of what a technological society will demand of man becomes essential, without all the "looking backward" to outdated philosophical ideas, bankrupt economic systems, rigid institutionalized perspectives and archaic political structures. Man

must accept the proposition that he is "a part of nature" and that what he creates becomes an extension of himself and ultimately an extension of nature. In essence technology is natural environment. In essence technology is not artificial; it is not sterile; it is not unliving. Rather, it is the new natural environment. Man must discover new ideas, new perspectives, dynamic life styles and viable social and political structures which will enable him to adjust to the new nature of the technological world.

Third; yesterday is ancient history; man must sever the "albatross" of the past from his neck so that he can invent and create value systems which will allow him to reap the benefits of plenty and leisure that technology will provide.

Finally, love, death, birth and nature must be so radically redefined that it is imperative that man race ahead of his time to explore the philosophical demands of the future, or else he will find himself corrupting the magical abundance that technology promises. Don't corrupt it, learn to live within it. Hell, don't even learn to live within it—become a god and learn to live beyond it!

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Correction

A major power was dropped from one of the sentences in Ashok Kapur's letter in the October issue. The sentence should read: "Other meaning can be seen in the relationship between nonalignment and power politics, as, for instance, in Nehru's concern to pursue a defense policy through friendship with the USA, USSR and China. . . ."