

## The Spirit of Liberalism by Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr.

(Harvard University Press; 130 pp.; \$13.50)

Lloyd Davis Raines

This book, consisting of six essays published over the last few years, was “provoked partly by the deliberate provocations of the New Left” and ultimately by the failure of liberals to defend liberalism and themselves. For the author, liberalism had degenerated into a “trembling doctrine,” liberals being unable to distinguish between the suitable and the tolerable. In fact, they had forgotten that the “classic” liberalism of Hobbes, Locke, Jefferson, and Madison was a tough-minded doctrine which based justice on enlightened self-interest. Recognizing the inevitability of factions, liberals used to be cognizant of the impossibility of eliminating their causes, which derived from the nature of man; they therefore devised a government of checks and balances to control the effects of factions. Since this polity has *both* oligarchic and democratic elements by design, maintaining a balance between these two elements is crucial to our system’s vitality.

Unfortunately, as Mansfield indicates, many liberals have forgotten that they are liberals. Having benefited disproportionately from political and intellectual freedom and equal opportunity, liberals ought to defend those principles. But they speak as democrats or radicals, unmindful of the importance of the oligarchic component in the republican whole. Therefore these liberals are vulnerable to attack from the Left, since they advocate democratic and egalitarian policies, but are unable to explain why “liberals always come out on top.”

Although Mansfield’s risible diagnosis of the capitulation of many liberals to non(anti)liberal doctrines has much to commend it, he extends the analysis in untenable ways. For example, he states that the “success of a mixed

regime depends on a recognition that it *is* a mixed regime.” Surely our form of representative government, underpinned by post-Keynesian capitalism, has been “successful” for reasons that have little to do with the way liberals think—or fail to think. Strangely enough, both Mansfield and the New Left err in the same manner; they ascribe too much power to the thought patterns of liberals. Furthermore, the “cultivated ignorance” of liberals regarding their identity as liberals (“men of ambition who have enough demonstrable talent to think themselves capable of being outstanding in some way”) is useful. It enables them ostensibly to join the democratic majority while maximizing their pecuniary advantages (the business wing), their intellectual mastery (the academic wing), or their political power (the political wing).

Liberal support for non(anti)liberal programs such as affirmative action (which the author overestimates) may not constitute use of privileged status to destroy tolerance for privilege, as Mansfield claims. Despite the rhetoric, it is not clear that strategies such as affirmative action indicate an aversion to equality of opportunity in favor of equality of results. In fact, affirmative action is often the vehicle by which certain outstanding individuals who happen to be members of some brand-name disadvantaged group (whether defined by race, national origin, surname, gender, or even sexual preference) seek to maximize their own upward mobility and security. Affirmative action as a program provides them with a useful means to their goal; affirmative action as a principle provides a convenient ideology, equating personal gain with group advancement. In fact, these outstanding leaders of affirmative action have be-

come a new *élite* with their own vested interests. Perhaps it is justifiable to call them liberals.

One suspects that the author would have realized this had he extended his trenchant criticism of feminism. The emulation by feminists of male institutions such as the “old boy network” and exclusive clubs indicates a fervent desire to join the liberal *élite*—not to abolish it. Furthermore, liberals who condemn these practices when perpetrated by men praise them when done by women under the rubric of “networking.” This indicates that at least some liberals see affirmative action as a way of infusing new blood into leadership ranks—not abolishing leadership (or privilege). In this light, it is not clear that Mansfield is correct in urging liberals to adopt a self-conscious strategy of defending themselves. Many are doing very well indeed by doing good.

Almost anyone can find ample provocation by reading this excellent, though sometimes vexing, little book. In one chapter the author mounts a devastating attack on Charles Reich’s *The Greening of America* and offers a thoughtful critique of Robert Dahl’s notions of polyarchy as expressed in *After the Revolution*. In another chapter he analyzes Theodore Lowi’s *The End of Liberalism* and correctly points out that liberalism—even in its sophisticated disguise of opposition to itself—does not question a basis premise of Machiavelli: All government is oppressive. Eventually, according to Mansfield, the success of the democratic program of dispersing power and privilege as widely as practicable would compel us to examine the nature of power and government. The venerable American aphorism that the cure for the problems of democracy is more democracy would have to be jettisoned. The author advocates a serious intellectual effort to question the roots of modernity and to revive the “ancient writers” who provide “the only true alternative to liberalism.”

There are several fundamental flaws in this superb little philippic. The author never defines liberals or liberalism satisfactorily. In fact, Mansfield’s subject is really American liberals and American liberalism. As Louis Hartz so aptly put it, there is a great deal of difference between being Benjamin Franklin (American liberals) in fact and being Jeremy Bentham (British liberals) in theory. Liberalisms do vary in

many salient respects. The author seriously underestimates the impact of the Vietnam war, and he neglects the influence of post-World War II prosperity and the confidence it engendered in government's ability to manage the

economy. Will Mansfield's cool cucumber liberals remain cool when faced with a disastrous decline in production and concomitant unemployment? Will they remain so indifferent to their own defense if faced with unremitting ter-

rorism or ecocatastrophe? Perhaps relaxed liberalism is a product of the absence of a vigorous challenge to liberalism. The New Left was weak, and most liberals, unlike the author, knew it. **WV**

## The Arab-Israeli Conflict —Psychological Obstacles to Peace by Daniel Heradstveit

(Columbia University Press; 232 pp.; \$17.00)

### Lance Howland

International politics and psychology are theoretically wed by the premise that both are determined by principles of human behavior. Daniel Heradstveit effects this wedding in *The Arab-Israeli Conflict—Psychological Obstacles to Peace*.

To the psychologist this book offers a system for studying adversarial thinking. Heradstveit analyzes responses to standardized questions made by the "elites" of the Middle East conflict: politicians, foreign affairs bureaucrats, guerrilla leaders on the Arab side, academics, and journalists. In this data he searches for their "cognitive invariants"—the basic beliefs they fall back on in uncertain situations.

To the political scientist the study offers a conceptualization of the bases of conflict. Heradstveit unearths fundamentals of adversarial psychology that are frequently unstated in the political debates on the Mideast. For instance, the study describes psychological gyrations that the respondents perform to maintain a devil-image of their opponents. When the opponent makes a conciliatory or moderating move, the respondent interprets this as being forced by peculiar circumstances. When the opponent is hostile and aggressive, the respondent interprets this as true to character. Heradstveit argues that "Human beings as information processors generally tend to be conservative, and we may say that this is a rational way of dealing with information. But in situations of intense international conflict, it may be irrational." In any case, this conservatism helps to maintain the "cognitive invariants."

Heradstveit maneuvers analytically through a finite field of concepts. He sketches bold, simplistic belief patterns without finer shadings to tone them. For example, religion as a psychological factor is not mentioned in the study. Personal outlooks are classified as either optimistic or pessimistic, either pluralistic or unitary. On the basis of such dualistic appraisals people are rated as purely consistent, moderately consistent, or inconsistent.

On the basis of these appraisals, Heradstveit cites cognitive conservatism as the major obstacle to peace. To resolve the conflict, he maintains, the actors must be willing to shed stereotypes and recognize the plurality of their opponents' viewpoints: "Being able to see conflictual as well as moderating forces in the opponent's camp sensitized one to the possibility that one's own policies may interact with these tendencies, and that policies of one's own side may be influential in bringing about change." Another problem with the unitary outlook is the rationalization that one's own side has no choice but to adopt the hard line. Heradstveit found the élites taking this attitude while blaming opponents for choosing the most hostile of the perceived alternatives.

But the most intriguing problem addressed seems to undercut Heradstveit's own effort. He criticizes participants for "over-psychologizing" the conflict, for dwelling on the changing of their opponents' attitudes as the solution while ignoring the nuts and bolts of politics. Too much time is spent listening to opponents' rhetoric, too little on observing their actions. Heradstveit implies

that the degree of abstract thinking about future peace betrays a lack of "articulate thinking."

The author gathered his data from respondents in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (only three from Syria) in two-year intervals from 1970 to 1976. Thus he was able to correlate changes in beliefs before and after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, although the same people were not interviewed in all the samples. After the war, which rattled the notion of Israeli military invincibility, Arab respondents perceived

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*"Human beings as information processors . . . tend to be conservative . . ."*

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themselves as more belligerent. They saw the Israelis as less expansionist or less militarily powerful. Israeli attitudes were more stable, but tended to become less optimistic about prospects for peace. (The study could not, of course, take into account the impact of the Sadat-Begin diplomacy beginning in 1977.)

Heradstveit's analyses are useful in revealing belief patterns that are often assumed but seldom articulated. However, he falls short of his stated goal of identifying processes that could lead to conflict resolution. His narrow theoretical framework misses both the element of emotion and the unpredictable intervention of people who are capable of transcending stereotypes. **WV**