

CIVILIZATION AND FOREIGN  
POLICY: A NOTE ON SOME  
RECENT AMERICAN LITERATURE  
IN THAT FIELD

In an introduction to Louis J. Halle's *Civilization and Foreign Policy*, Dean Acheson notes with approval that Halle believed a group of men, formerly members of the Policy Planning Staff of the United States State Department, to be seeking a new theory of foreign policy which would lie outside the traditional theory.<sup>1</sup> Halle's work, like that of the others whose names were mentioned (George F. Kennan, Paul Nitze, and C. B. Marshall), represented a serious and searching analysis of the conceptual frame of American foreign policy, a search largely accompanied by a demand for a more realistic consideration of problems of power. The members of the Policy Planning Staff were by no means the only, or even the first, Americans to question American thinking on foreign policy from the standpoint of power politics. Without going back to Alexander Hamilton, we must consider, in particular, Hans J.

1. New York: Harper, 1952, 1955.

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Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr.<sup>2</sup> This kind of thinking is still being advanced; and, more recently, the warning that Americans misunderstood the problem of power was put with some forcefulness by Robert Endicott Osgood: "More than any other great nation, America's basic predispositions and her experience in world politics encourage the dissociation of power and policy."<sup>3</sup> There is no doubt that work of recent years has shown the increased seriousness of American interest in the problems of foreign policy and civilization. The contribution which these and other writers have made is a very great one. Despite many differences among themselves, their trend seems to embody a certain oneness, which lies in a perception of the problems of power. Acheson points to the practical experience of the State Department group and their intention to "see life steadily and see it whole," in Matthew Arnold's famous phrase.<sup>4</sup> Yet, a few years after these writers, whom Acheson so highly regarded, had tried to acquaint the American people with the realities of power in foreign policy, one of them, George F. Kennan, was publicly criticized by Acheson himself for "never having understood the realities of power politics." Shortly thereafter, Acheson, in his latest book, reiterated the charge that "power politics" was, for Americans, still a derogatory term.<sup>5</sup> Kennan, one of our most thoughtful and sensitive writers on foreign policy, and Acheson, one of our most articulate and eloquent secretaries of state, had failed to satisfy the American people, and Kennan had failed, apparently, to satisfy Acheson regarding the significance and the reality of power politics. Yet in the light of some of the literature which has appeared since the rise of these writers, whom we may call "realists" though they do not necessarily so characterize themselves, one may question whether the danger is still that which Acheson described. One who reads Henry A. Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* may wonder not whether Americans understand the realities of power<sup>6</sup> but whether, indeed, some of them understand anything else. We face the danger that the wheel may come full circle, that a naïve idealism may be replaced by a

2. For an analysis of this trend see Kenneth W. Thompson, "The Study of International Relations," *Review of Politics*, XIV (October, 1952), pp. 433 ff.

3. *Limited War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 29.

4. Halle, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

5. *Power and Diplomacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 30.

6. New York: Harper, 1957.

purely methodical realism, and that the very words “politics” and “strategy” may become interchangeable terms. We face that danger, but let no one suspect that Americans, in general, have succumbed to it.

The purpose of this note is to examine some of the problems raised by the new school of “realists” in American foreign policy thinking, particularly that which relates civilization and foreign policy. Indeed, Halle’s title is an apt one, for it suggests that there is a necessary relation between a nation’s foreign policy and the political principles which guide its domestic life. Halle sees foreign policy as a “necessary reflection of national character as it is today” and finds each civilization as representing a “particular vision of the universe and man’s place in it” (pp. 27, 171). American foreign policy, then, is in some way a product of American civilization, and certain distinctly American ideas, as well as more generally Western ideas, material conditions, chance, and other causes radically affect the peculiarity of that policy. It follows, too, that the ideas of the new realists are as much related to American thought as are those of their predecessors.

To understand the new realism, one must understand something of its critique of its predecessors. This is a criticism of a moralistic perfectionism, which sees the traditional American thinking on foreign policy as demanding “a moral and emotional appeal” and calls for a concentration less on perfection than on utility.<sup>7</sup> It sees some of our past mistakes as coming particularly from that kind of idealism which puts its hopes in the progressive development of international law and, ultimately, in a world state. It questions Woodrow Wilson’s actions in placing the idea of an international legal order above the preservation of a balance of power in Europe after World War I.<sup>8</sup> Its opposition to Wilsonian idealism is deep-seated, and in its own treatment of foreign policy it concentrates less on international organization than on what it considers the realities of power. Indeed, it regards the trend—wholesome and necessary—in the study of foreign policy as a trend in the direction of studying “underlying forces.”<sup>9</sup>

7. Osgood, *op. cit.*, p. 279, and chap. ii, *passim*; Charles Burton Marshall, *The Limits of Foreign Policy* (New York, 1954), pp. 27, 54, and *passim*.

8. Osgood, *op. cit.*, pp. 97–98; George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), Part I, chap. iv, *passim*; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among the Nations* (2d ed., New York: Knopf, 1954), pp. 512–13.

9. Thompson, *loc. cit.*

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The realist criticism, however, goes far deeper than attacking Wilsonian idealism. The thought which it criticizes, and which still persists, is part of the liberal tradition, and attack on it may be viewed as a criticism of the liberal tradition, though its exponents would not necessarily agree with this statement. Realism views the particular consequences of perfectionism as part of a peculiarly American dynamic or, in Osgood's terms, views progressive pacifism as having among Americans "a distinct sense of immediacy" (p. 32).

The realists have seen clearly the relation between idealism and ruthlessness that has developed in modern political thought. They understand that a society dedicated to perpetual peace and the establishment of a world order based on consent may fight, if it does so, with a savage and moralistic ruthlessness. They recognize the extent to which, in Acheson's words, the "moralism of an outraged pacifism" contributed to "the triumph of the belief in unlimited force."<sup>10</sup> They see the dangers in a *hubris* derived from progressively successful technological progress. They recognize the "irresponsible form of self-righteousness" (Osgood, p. 283) in thought and action which, in eschewing force, is compelled to become more dependent on it than it need otherwise be.<sup>11</sup> Since they appreciate the weakness of doctrinairism, they prefer the old world of diplomacy to the new world of unlimited goals. The restoration of that old world, insofar as it is possible at all, would demand a courageous independence of group pressures and an unwillingness to rely too heavily on public opinion.<sup>12</sup> It would demand the return of a certain moral consensus, which, as we have repeatedly been told, prevailed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> Whether or not that consensus, which belonged to a world run by fewer people, can be restored, the realists see that a less idealistic foreign policy is often a less pretentious and a less ruthless one. While the level of morality in any international consensus might not satisfy some Americans, the realists recognize that the moral consensus of a small group of diplomats

10. *Op. cit.*, p. 35; Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 87 ff; Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 104; Osgood, *op. cit.*, pp. 87, 90.

11. See esp. Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), chap. i.

12. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, passim*; see the discussion of the problem in Kurt Riezler, *Political Decisions in Modern Society* (printed as a supplement to *Ethics*, LXIV [January, 1954], 8 ff.).

13. See, among others, Harold Nicolson, *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method* (London: Constable; New York: Macmillan, 1954), pp. 62 ff., 74 ff.; also Osgood, *op. cit.*, 81 ff.

might, and once did, avoid the dangers of the moral intransigence of an aroused public opinion. They try to guide a man's future to a world of limited expectations and, therefore, to a world of limited strife. They have, at least, some recognition that a world of limited expectations does not rest easily beside a world in which everyone is urged to think as we think or act as we act. In so doing, they become suspicious of an action based on narrowly moral considerations. They have tried, in effect, to lend support to the statement of Alexander Hamilton that "all for love and a world well lost" is not "a fundamental maxim in politics."<sup>14</sup>

In their opposition to doctrinairism and sentimentality, the realists have done great service indeed to American thinking on the subject of foreign policy and civilization. Yet, while the association of foreign policy and civilization may help in the understanding of the new realists, there is some doubt as to how far it helps in the understanding of foreign policy itself. The very term "civilization" is ambiguous. At one time it meant a state of society in which men had chosen to live and which was in some way superior to "natural" or "barbarian" society. When a contemporary writer speaks of civilization, however, he usually contrasts it not with an "uncivilized" state of nature but with another civilization, whereas Hobbes and Locke had clearly intended to contrast a superior "civil society" with an inferior "state of nature." The concept has progressed in vagueness in our time. Halle, it is true, does contrast "civilization" and "barbarism," and considers communism as incapable of establishing a civilization because its view of man is degrading (p. 179). Halle sees our "traditional civilization" as "civilized" because of its emphasis on "individual human dignity" (p. 167), but he also regards Hellenic times as "civilized," whereas he could hardly relate them to the concept of "individual human dignity." Since, like many of his fellow-realists, he is full of admiration for the American way of life yet deplors in part American thinking on foreign policy, there is some doubt as to whether he does ultimately relate foreign policy to civilization.

In general, we may summarize the realists' criticism by referring to Osgood's contention that Americans in particular have, in their tradition, encouraged the divorce between power and politics. Whether this is a valid thesis is extremely difficult to determine. In a way it seems to

14. *Pacificus*, No. 4, in *Works* (New York, 1851), VII, 98.

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be true. We were involved in the League of Nations, but our Senate rejected it. We had nothing to do with the Holy Alliance, which Castle-reagh condemned in much the same terms as the Briand-Kellogg Pact was later condemned. Woodrow Wilson had something to do with the breakdown of diplomacy, but so did Lloyd George. If John Dewey is a modern utopian, so is Karl Marx. Debates about the responsibilities of a "civilization" do not get one very far. What distinguishes one civilization from another is a body of political principles. In other words, accidents of geography, material resources, and "national character," meaningful as they are, hardly stand with what people love and hate, believe and renounce, and, at a higher level, think and know (Halle, p. 170). Thus, while it might not be difficult to prove that the "divorce between power and politics" does have important, especially American, manifestations, it is virtually impossible to prove that these manifestations are what determines the nature of the civilization. If a regime, or what is vaguely called a "civilization," is determined chiefly by its political principles, which is what West and East so often claim, the political principles themselves are common to Western modernity, and probably to all modernity (cf. Osgood, pp. 32, 81). A realist can make a serious mistake by minimizing the effect of rationality in what we call "civilization." Our common heritage, and indeed our deliberately chosen common heritage, is one of liberalism and of scientific technology. Our "civilization" must be understood in these terms, and it is in no radical sense peculiarly American—but it is peculiarly modern.

A criticism of this common heritage is, then, ultimately a criticism of the liberal tradition. Such a criticism may, and should, recognize the great goods of the tradition. It must, however, ask whether there is a meeting ground between idealism and realism in that tradition. If men cannot find such a ground or if that proves insufficient, man must seek a new way.

The new realists do not really offer a new way. They may offer a middle way, because they are, generally speaking, committed to the liberal ideals—perhaps as much as the idealists they criticize. Both Marshall (p. 30) and Halle (p. 54) regard the goals of foreign policy as easy to establish. Halle is certain that a world government which had standards similar to those of American democracy, and which upheld universal freedom, would be a good thing. That suggests that Marshall and Halle would, in effect, accept the liberal goal of the idealists they criticize and that their criticism of idealism is a criticism of means.

Osgood, too, accepts the liberal goals and says that “the great moral achievements remain where they always have been, in the realm of the cultural, political, and social conditions of existence” (p. 283). Osgood may not be so sure of progress as some of our idealists, but he still relates the “ideal world” to the “consent of the community” (p. 16). Kissinger wonders whether the nuclear age does not offer opportunities as well as risks (p. 20). Even Kennan, whose penetrating and courageous questioning of our foreign policy in his Reith lectures is so real a contribution to our thinking, finished by quoting Thoreau to the effect that “there is no ill which may not be dissipated, like the dark, if you let a stronger light in upon it.”<sup>15</sup> Kennan’s views of the American realities have been of enormous service to his countrymen, but statements of this kind represent no more than a will to believe, a will that is shared by the liberal tradition.

If the goals of foreign policy are, in fact, easy; if it is easy to know that world government, based on consent, is unalloyed good, however difficult of attainment; if the light will really dissipate the dark, then the only thing wrong with Wilsonian idealism was its choice of means. One difficulty is that the goal of a world state, as expressed for example by Halle, represents an extreme form, almost a caricature of Wilsonian aspirations, with a greater reliance on public opinion and the necessary engineering of world consent. Halle, of course, is a realist and considers this goal highly improbable within the foreseeable future. Perhaps a greater difficulty, therefore, is the dilemma caused by a commitment to realism, on the one hand, and to liberalism, on the other. This dilemma is understandable in the light of the fact that the alternatives to liberalism usually presented in our time are morally repulsive; but it is still a dilemma. It leads to a peculiar kind of double standard, with democracy as the key to domestic policy and power as the key to foreign policy, often expressed in terms of a separation of politics and morality. Seen in this way, the quarrel between idealists and realists is one between those who believe that some kind of individual morality (a morality derived from the marriage of Christianity and liberalism—of doubtful legality, since at least one of the partners was under age) should be a standard for national and international conduct and those who believe that it cannot be. The latter, accepting the morality itself, are obliged to accept a double standard as a human necessity, a standard which sees

15. *Russia, the Atom, and the West* (New York: Harper, 1957, 1958), p. 99.

political life as less moral than private life. They are compelled to insist that there is an unbridgeable gap between politics and morality.<sup>16</sup> One can readily understand the urgency which compelled Niebuhr and others to deplore excessive moralism in our thinking about foreign policy and to suggest that there is a more moral life than the political life—the life of a Christian saint.<sup>17</sup> Jeanne d'Arc was, however, canonized, and we may wonder whether there is not something wrong with the morality that is at tension with politics. Anyone who accepts the very real insight offered by the realist criticism may have to live with this double standard unless he can discover a morality that is not apolitical. To find that morality, he would have first to go back to liberalism and the common roots of realists and idealists. It is widely recognized in the United States that the early American statesmen were wiser than most of those who have come since, and closer to political reality. That view is shared by Kennan and seems to be shared by others of these writers as well.<sup>18</sup> These early American statesmen belonged to a liberal tradition stemming from Hobbes but acknowledging, more freely, its debt to Locke. Hobbes and Locke might, of course, be called realists, but we have to ask in what sense they were realists. They looked to find the meaning of man in a state of nature, a state where life is bestial and where the inconveniences are very great indeed. In Hobbes's state of nature, where each man seeks to preserve himself, he seeks also to exercise power over others, or at least enough men do so to render self-preservation precarious. In such a state destructiveness travels apace, and the object of civil society is determined by the vanity and violence of the state of nature. Its object is necessarily peace. Morality itself is identified by Hobbes with the fear of violent death and therefore with the growth of peaceful pursuits and habits. Those peaceful habits are developed, however, within civil society itself. Sovereign and warring nations are, on the contrary, in a state of nature.

While this is generally accepted as Hobbes's view, it is less widely conceded as far as Locke is concerned. Locke's statement: "Principles of action indeed are lodged in men's appetites; but these are so far from

16. See esp. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribner's, 1932, 1946); *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York, 1940), esp. chap. i; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), chap. vii; Thompson, *loc. cit.*, Kennan, *Realities*, p. 49.

17. *Christianity and Power Politics*, p. 23.

18. *Realities*, p. 3; cf. Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 41, 42, 53, 54; Halle, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–23.



being innate moral principles, that if they were left to their full swing they would carry men to the overturning of all morality"<sup>19</sup> must, however, lead us to conclude that he denies natural morality as strongly as Hobbes and that his view of human nature has much in common with that of Hobbes. His state of nature is, like Hobbes's, a state of war.<sup>20</sup> Where Locke differs from Hobbes is in his regarding absolute monarchy as retaining and even magnifying the inconveniences of the state of nature, where a man is a judge in his own case (though, in absolute monarchy, not each man) and therefore, implicitly, in a state of war.<sup>21</sup> For Locke as well as for Hobbes and more explicitly, all "princes and rulers of independent governments . . . are in a state of nature."<sup>22</sup> In a state of nature, power is unchecked. Hence it is clear that the idea of power, so significant in the writings of our new realists, is at the root of Locke's thinking regarding foreign policy, for it is only in civil society, and by means of constitutional law, that the desire for power is reliably restrained. And it is that civil society which directs the love of power to peaceful pursuits (i.e., private well-being) which most completely fulfils the teaching of both men. It is no accident that the idea of the "pursuit of happiness," so important to Jefferson, is found in the chapter on "The Idea of Power" in Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Here our realists, who generally accept the modern goals of technological advancement and the more abundant life, are as idealistic as our idealists.

The founders of modern liberalism, fully aware of the realities of power, hoped, with the establishment of civil society, for peace. Would peace not also be their goal for all the world as well as for any independent civil society? Some, at least, of their critics saw it that way. Rousseau denied that any philosopher had succeeded in recapturing the state of nature, though all of them had tried.<sup>23</sup> He himself, however, claimed to have achieved that state. He saw natural man as an animal.<sup>24</sup>

19. *Essay on Human Understanding*, Vol. I, chap. ii, par. 13.

20. See Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 225, and the citations from Locke therein.

21. *Treatises of Civil Government*, II, 90.

22. *Ibid.*, II, 14.

23. *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* in *Œuvres* (Paris, 1823), I, 224.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 227 ff.

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While the philosopher might find his way back to the state of nature, in speech and in understanding, society could never return to its animalism. The self-love which distinguished man's animal existence was replaced by other attachments. Indeed, Rousseau says: "Le plus méchant des hommes est celui qui s'isole le plus, qui concentre le plus son cœur en lui-même; le meilleur est celui qui partage également ses affections à tous ses semblables."<sup>25</sup> The true civil society would be established through an extension of the passion of love: from self-love to love of another person, from love of another person to love of country, from love of country to love of humanity. How far Rousseau himself would have gone toward perpetual peace is an open question.<sup>26</sup> Certainly, however, it is on the basis of Rousseau's criticism of the state of nature of his predecessors that Kant wrote his essay on perpetual peace. Any full treatment of the affinity of realism and idealism would require a systematic analysis of Kant's text and an answer to the question of how far it is a necessary inference from the principles of Hobbes. That task cannot be attempted here. I can only comment briefly on the relation of power and peace, of realism and idealism, in the liberal tradition.

Like Hobbes and Locke, Kant saw the world of independent nations as a state of war.<sup>27</sup> He denied, however, that these nations are in a state of nature, because of the modification of original nature by constitutional law within them.<sup>28</sup> If independent nations are in a state of war, it follows that any treaty of peace dictated by victory, lethargy, expediency, or some other temporary condition is not really worthy of the name "peace." If, however, they are not in the state of nature but have risen above their original state, reason ought to persuade men of their duty to peace, and the same compulsion which made men, in a state of nature, submit to constitutional law ought to unify nations under a world law.<sup>29</sup> What they ought to do, however, they will not necessarily do, and "nature" must direct them to perpetual peace. Once you have said, as Rousseau did, that man is by nature an animal, which he cannot again become, you have suggested that nature has, in some way, a progressive meaning, related to history. In that case, just as man was

25. *Lettre à M. d'Alembert*, in *Œuvres*, II, 164–65.

26. *Œuvres*, V, 413 ff.

27. *Eternal Peace*, Sec. II.

28. *Ibid.*, second definitive article and comment.

29. *Ibid.*, First Addition.

graduated from animalism to civil society, warring nations may be graduated from animalism to world federation. Of critical importance in this graduation is the development of property and of commerce, and Kant suggested that all nations would sooner or later fall under the spell of commerce, and he followed Montesquieu in regarding the spirit of commerce as pacific.<sup>30</sup> Neither Montesquieu nor Kant indulged in sentimental visions of the nobility of commerce. The foundations of its peaceful spirit are in the selfishness of man, and Montesquieu regarded the spirit of commerce as a kind of mean between virtue and brigandage.

Admittedly, one does a certain violence to Kant's analysis by concentrating simply on the apparently utopian character of his conclusion; but my problem is that, unless the liberal tradition accepts the utopian alternative, it seems to be at the mercy of an ambiguity between peace, as the great goal of civil society, and power, the negation of peace, as the frame of international relations. Leo Strauss points out that Hobbes "destroyed the moral basis of national defense. . . . The only solution to the difficulty which preserves the spirit of Hobbes' political philosophy," he adds, "is the outlawry of war or the establishment of a world state."<sup>31</sup> That the idealistic solution was implicit in their very realism was recognized by some of the founders of modern thought. Giordano Bruno contrasts the way of the "new Typhons" (Columbus and those who followed him), who disturbed the peace of others, with that of the Nolan, whose science would free the mind and, by implication, bring peace.<sup>32</sup> Francis Bacon supports imperialism, but his own best regime is the peaceful society of Bensalem, which exists for many warless centuries. It is easy for us today to say that these philosophers miscalculated. I can only mention briefly here two of the unfulfilled expectations of Bacon—one of the founders of modern thought. Bacon believed that it would be possible to found a kind of civil religion to replace Christianity—a religion of rational hedonism, constructed out of an alliance of old, paternal power and young, vigorous science. What is perhaps even more important, he believed that, while modern science would have to give rise to the expert, he had found a formula to make the expert subordinate to the philosopher. In other words, books on strategy would

30. Cf. *ibid.*, First Addition, p. 3, with *De l'Esprit des Lois*, XX, 1.

31. *Op. cit.*, pp. 197–98.

32. *La Cena de le Ceneri*, in *Opere Italiane* (Gentile ed.; Bari, 1927), I, 24–25.

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be written by the Xenophons and the Machiavellis, or by those under their control, and strategy would be, not politics, but a very minor part of it.<sup>33</sup>

Should that have happened, it is doubtful that the problem of power, important as it was to Bacon, and even more so to Hobbes,<sup>34</sup> would have achieved its present proportions among the new realists. The idea of power became a substitute for the idea of rule. Power differs from rule not only in that it suggests potentiality rather than actuality but also in that it claims no moral justification in nature. Rule implies a certain kind of superiority, not necessarily the coincidence of natural and conventional superiority. The idea of power rises with the idea that man can do what he wants to do. In order to make sure that what man wants to do is not oppressive, men have distinguished between the power of man over nature and the power of man over man. However that may be, modern ideas of power find their fruit in modern technology. Technological advancement is, obviously, part of the modern world, and it relates, in a strange way, realists who want to make power the basis of our thinking and idealists who hope for a warless world, distinguishing the power of man over nature from the power of man over man. Both these groups depend rather on power than on rule, and that means that they must abandon ultimately the conditioning of our thought by any *telos* (end or final cause). Both Marshall and Kissinger attack what they call the "quest for certainty" in our thinking about foreign policy.<sup>35</sup> While their meaning is not absolutely clear to me, the quest for certainty, in the sense of the end, did not lead to modern technological advancement and the teaching regarding power which conditioned it. Modern philosophy, in its concentration on building a better world, believed that possible precisely because the world about man was held to be alien and incomprehensible. In other words, it hoped to use power for peace and plenty precisely because it abandoned the quest for certainty, as Bacon made clear when he said

33. I have tried to prove this in a recently completed study of Bacon's political philosophy.

34. *Leviathan*, chap. x.

35. Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 106; Kissinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 189, 424. Kissinger associates the quest for certainty with American empiricism. Since that quest was attacked by John Dewey also, its relation to American empiricism is not quite so simple as Kissinger suggests.

that final causes could be found for only political things.<sup>36</sup> If, as many of our realists have seen, terror has some of its roots in idealism, it is necessary to go a step further and see that idealism has its roots in materialism. The paradise may be near or far, but it is still a hedonists' paradise.

If we cannot altogether divorce "power politics" from the intellectual tradition that gave it birth, neither can we divorce the new technology from that same heritage. "The dilemma of nuclear war is with us," says Kissinger, "not by choice, but because of the facts of modern technology" (p. 175). The facts of modern technology, however, are with us by choice, and if the dilemma of nuclear war was not foreknown at the time the choice was made, it was implicit. Marshall puts the problem cogently: "Because this is an age of mass production, it is also an age of mass destruction. The scope and destructiveness of modern weapons are the product of—and under the logic of war an essential accompaniment of—the conditions and technics of industrial progress" (p. 63). Even in the peaceful utopia of the New Atlantis there were engines of ever greater violence and fires that time could not quench.<sup>37</sup> It seems to me that Marshall poses the alternatives. The logic of modern war is the logic of technological progress. Man may devise means, as often and as wisely as he can, to prevent the worst possible consequences. But the alliance between mass production and mass destruction can be permanently voided only by a warless civilization or by a civilization which does not worship technological progress. The first does not seem to be within human possibility. The second will be extremely difficult. Its importance, however, is seen by some of our new realists, notably by George F. Kennan. Kennan asks for a new social philosophy which "will have to take account of the fact that the satisfying of man's material needs is only the beginning, and does not answer, but only opens up for the first time in all their real complexity and difficulty, the crucial questions as to what environmental conditions are most favorable to man's individual enjoyment of the experience of life and to the dignity of his relationship with other men."<sup>38</sup>

36. *De sapientia veterum*, 26 ("Prometheus"), in *Works* (London, 1861), XIII, 44; Compare *Novum organum*, Book I, par. 48.

37. Bacon, *Works*, V, 408.

38. "Commencement, 1955," *Social Research*, XXII (Summer, 1955), 136.

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One must, perhaps, go farther than that, and say that the common modern ideology, common to realists and idealists, capitalists and communists, West and East, which teaches the right of all men to the infinite benevolence of a science devoted to material welfare, is wrong. It is not wrong because we begrudge any man bread, wine, or penicillin. It is not wrong because we are indifferent to poverty and distress. It is wrong because there are principles that are at once loftier and less pretentious than those it holds. These are the principles of the "new philosophy" which Kennan seeks. Actually it is a very old philosophy, and what Kennan wants can be found, and as far as I know can only be found, in classical political philosophy. To say that is not to say that modern man can return to the ancient polis or that we can learn nothing about foreign policy from modern philosophy or history. It is rather to say that the way Plato and Aristotle looked at politics may furnish us with the critique with which to appraise both realism and idealism in foreign policy. Unless such a critique is in some measure possible, it is hard to believe that there will be any relation between civilization and foreign policy which the ordinary person can identify.

There are many respects in which classical political thought may furnish us with the critique that we need. I shall speak briefly of four. The first is that it does not regard technological advancement as autonomous. There is a technological paradise in Plato's *Critias*—the island of Atlantis, graced with plenty and eventually cursed with *hubris*. It is destroyed after Zeus calls together the gods to decree its chastisement. Its *hubris* brought its destruction, the destruction which men who pretend to be gods must expect. When Bacon declared that men could imitate the thunderbolt, he stated in effect that *hubris* could go unpunished.<sup>39</sup> Plato scolded Egypt for turning the study of numbers into the study of gain; the use of a beautiful pursuit dedicated to wisdom, for mundane ends.<sup>40</sup> It is not easy for us to accept this indictment. Indeed, our problem is no longer whether we should have scientific expansion for what Bacon frequently calls "the relief of man's estate," but how that advancement should be regulated. For better or for worse, modern man made the decision that penicillin was worth a bomb and freedom from want was worth a jet. Any solution, however, that supplies penicillin without bombs would depend on a carefully regulated

39. *Redargutio philosophiarum*, in *Works*, VII, 93.

40. *Laws* 747 C 3 ff.

technology, in which the autonomous right of the scientist to decide between penicillin and bombs would be rigidly controlled. Such controls will not be easy; they will not always be salutary. I am not saying that political power has any claim to make such decisions and to impose such controls. Someone, however, must make these decisions. Modern thought, concentrating on method, gave rise to the master of method, the expert. Modern science makes the expert necessary, for modern science depends so much on shared experience and collective research. The expert, however, disregards the ends, and, as Kurt Riezler pointed out, "there are no experts for ends."<sup>41</sup> Classical political philosophy would seek a means to subordinate the expert and enlist his service in the cause of those who are concerned with ends.

The pretentiousness of the technological utopia, however, goes beyond that and includes a propensity for making grandiose decisions that increase the dependence on chance and necessity and narrow the realm of choice. To Plato and Aristotle the polis is a community in the sense in which no world government can possibly be a community, and the fact that the polis is a community is one reason for regarding morality and politics as undivided. World government, on the contrary, would be not only unlikely but also tyrannical. Because of its dependence on modern communication and transportation, on atomization, on wholly impersonal class alignments, it would be unable to depend, as did the polis at its best, on friendship. World government would, moreover, move farther in the direction in which both East and West have been moving, where the righting of any wrong, not to say error, becomes more and more unlikely. It would defy the recurrence of humane things and, even under a democracy, would tend to identify what we have with what is good, to a greater extent, perhaps, than was previously done. How that differs in word and deed from the testimony of Socrates is well known.

The fundamental reason for the relatively modest expectations of classical thought was precisely the quest for certainty that positivists deplore. Men who seek something beyond and above man, of which man stands in awe, do not go around imitating thunderbolts. Men who regard reverence itself as ideological and power as the ultimate reality may certainly do so. That brings me to my second general statement:

41. "On the Psychology of Modern Revolution," *Social Research*, September, 1943, p. 328.

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classical political philosophy is at tension with ideology. It is well-known that what we call ideological warfare did not always exist but is a fruit of the modern mass society and certain modern political philosophers. Edmund Burke discussed it in his time as something quite new. The conviction that either democracy or communism is a goal to which all men must eventually subscribe is widely held in the modern world, and it is passionately embraced. The passion with which it is held is related to the dogmatic skepticism of the schools, for it is no accident that citizens hold with increasing fervor doctrines which the schools consider incapable of scientific proof. Precisely because all thought is held to be historically conditioned or because the underlying reality is power and not principle, men must be granted the right to hold the most erroneous and the most unjust notions and strive for them, though the world go down in flames. The answer to this is not suppression. The answer is to find a better yardstick for "ideologies" than dogmatic skepticism.

Plato and Aristotle regarded neither Athens nor Sparta as the best regime. The *Laws* is a dialogue in which the Athenian introduces, surreptitiously and in friendly discussion, certain institutions of pre-Marathon Athens into the Dorian Laws of Crete. The best legislator is the one who puts down class strife and creates harmony.<sup>42</sup> Class war abounds in Thucydides but has no justification in principle. Differences between one regime and another and between one philosophic teaching and another were very great, but on the level of common opinion the object of law and the object of speech were to create a harmony in the regard for noble objects, and that is what Socrates is supposed to have done through benevolent controversy.<sup>43</sup> Benevolent controversy may cease to be benevolent if it can issue not in truth but only in ideology. Modern relativism has not issued in toleration.

It may be true, and it seems to be true, that that which regimes honor all over the world reaches a certain sameness. One may find in this a kind of moral consensus, not that of the Western diplomatic tradition but rather a mass moral consensus. "Mass communication of ideas from one culture to another," says Marshall (p. 64), "has drawn the world more closely together." Marshall grants that it has also sharpened the differences. Halle, on the contrary, insists that a nation which has "ex-

42. *Laws* 627 D 9 ff., 689 D, 711 B ff.

43. Xenophon *Memorabilia* IV. vi. 15.



tensive dealings with independent foreign peoples . . . must cultivate a tolerant habit of mind” (p. 112). Mass public opinion means, in a certain sense, that all nations have such dealings, though not necessarily commercial ones. One can, of course, see a certain kind of consensus on the level of popular entertainment. Kennan points out that there will be no serious international repercussions if Europe rejects our automobiles, soft drinks, moving pictures, and comic books.<sup>44</sup> He is right, of course; but there is some evidence that Europe, and indeed the world, are not making any such rejection. One can say that this popular communication has its common ground because there is a meeting ground in ideas. Osgood (p. 47) and Halle (pp. 124–25), men who deplore Communist tyranny, question whether the Marxist goals may not be “idealistic.” I myself think that Marxist ends are hedonistic and based on a shallow materialism. At the same time, while liberal goals are certainly loftier, they share a similar attachment to the absolute value of well-being and the emulation of prosperity. This kind of consensus is, as I pointed out previously, the most widespread kind of ideology. It may still perform a service in keeping the peace. The difficulty is that it is unreliable. As long as one nation is more prosperous than another—and that seems likely to be the case—consensus may turn to envy and strife may ensue precisely because there is agreement as to the goals.

There is some doubt as to whether, on the basis of such a consensus, there can be any limitation upon warfare. Some writers, despairing like all decent men before absolute war with modern weapons, have tried to find a solution in a strategy of limited war (Osgood and Kissinger, *passim*). This means both localizing the war and limiting the weapons. The problem has been raised, however, as to just how limited this proposed limited war strategy really is. Limitation does not mean here the preclusion of all nuclear weapons but only of the biggest, directed against non-military targets. This concept has been criticized, both by Acheson and by Kennan, on the ground that tactical atomic weapons could result only in catastrophe in the areas in which they were used, however saving they might be to the United States and to the Soviet Union.<sup>45</sup> Granting that thinking in terms of limitation runs in the right direction, Kennan urges: “Let us by all means think for once not

44. *Russia, the Atom, and the West*, pp. 103–4.

45. Acheson, *Power and Diplomacy*, pp. 98 ff; Kennan, *Russia, the Atom, and the West*, pp. 56 ff.

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just in the mathematics of destruction" (p. 58). I cannot judge the technical issues involved here; I can say only that what Kennan said badly needed saying. I can also say that there are factors other than weapons, targets, and so on which may contribute to the limitations. One of these factors is the abandonment of ideological warfare, on the ground that there are higher political principles than history happens to have accorded to one side or the other. I have no quarrel with Western civilization, but it is at its best when it is humane and unpretentious. Unless, however, we can be convinced that there may be even better regimes than the one we have (though certainly not communism), any possible limitations on warfare remain subject to unlimited politics, the kind of politics classical thought once taught us to eschew.

A third way in which classical political thought may help us is seen in the fact that it found no substitute for statesmanship. To some extent that may be said of the modern tradition as well, for, while doctrinairism might have grown from Locke to Kant, diplomats continued to depend on prudence and discretion. Gradually, however, there has been a tendency to depend less on prudence and more on constitutional law. When the realists criticize political moralism, this development is one of the things they have in mind, for we tend to think of law as being more moral than diplomacy or statesmanship. If we go back to the classics, however, we go back to a morality that is not apolitical. Plato and Aristotle did not divorce politics from morality, and they were not pacifist perfectionists. The trouble with statements about the tension of politics and morality is that the realists who make them are likely to share the moral principles of the idealists they criticize. I think that the morality of Plato and Aristotle was better and therefore did not have to be divorced from politics.

Political life is, generally speaking, more moral than private life, in the sense that it offers a greater opportunity for moral action. That moral action is not directed toward self-fulfilment or abundance or longevity—or no more than marginally so. It is directed toward the highest excellence of which each of us is capable. Private morality, however, is directed toward the excellence of one's self and those for whom one is responsible, whereas public morality is directed toward the excellence of many. The just judge who preserves humanity by his leniency and obedience to the law by his severity is even more moral than the father who does the same with his children, because more

peoples are helped and man is compelled to face more risks prudently. Of course, there is a greater ruthlessness, but the courageous acceptance of that ruthlessness is certainly not immoral. There is even more ruthlessness in the case of the statesman who is compelled to take his people to war. It takes a lofty morality to recognize that necessity and to act firmly upon it. What is immoral is to tie the hands of the statesman so that a just war can no longer be waged, and that is what we have almost done. There is, it may be true, some element of doubtful morality in the ambition of just men. The rule of the reluctant is possible, generally speaking, only in the small community. Men who seek power because they are sure they are suited for it run the risk of pretentiousness. Men who seek power whether they are suited for it or not are frivolous. But there is no compulsion on the part of every political man to be either presumptuous or frivolous. That is merely another way of saying that greatness, even real statesmanship, is rare and that very few people have the loftiest political morality.

Because of the rarity of statesmanship, political science seeks, or once sought, to narrow the area of discretion. It therefore imposes constitutional restrictions wherever possible, but restrictions that may not prevent the future from acting. The statesman abstains from making those decisions that throw away the future—like the atomic bomb or world government. He understands that politics involves, in its most important aspects, “the total human situation.”<sup>46</sup> What is demanded of the political life, particularly in foreign policy, where the law goes so little of the way, is the capacity not only for making political decisions but for permitting coming generations to make decisions as well. The statesman who will not put the well-being and, even more, the virtue of his grandchildren at the risk of chance and necessity has understood, as the classics did, the loftiness of political morality.

The fourth way in which the classics could aid us, and the last one I shall discuss, relates to the fact that classical political philosophy regarded virtue as more important than consent. I must confine myself here chiefly to one problem, that of the just war. Through many modern generations it was possible to say that a war might be partly just on both sides, and such a claim tended to minimize the ruthlessness and emphasize justice in the conduct of war. Some kind of working

46. See Kurt Riezler, *Political Decisions in Modern Society*, printed as a supplement to *Ethics*, Vol. LXIV (January, 1954).

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compromise between the idea of just causes of war and the idea of just conduct on both sides made it possible for nations occasionally to follow the celebrated recommendation of Montesquieu: "Les diverses nations doivent se faire, dans la paix, le plus de bien, et, dans la guerre, le moins de mal qu'il est possible, sans nuire à leurs véritables intérêts."<sup>47</sup> This demand often coincided, however, with a search for the objective criteria by which a just war might be distinguished from an unjust war. Today we run the risk that the very idea of the just war may be discarded. Chapter vii of the Charter of the United Nations permits the Security Council to determine threat to the peace, breach of peace, or an act of aggression (Art. 39) and to take action, including action by armed force (Art. 42). Here the just war is defined in principle by the consensus on the Security Council, and that comes close to meaning the five permanent members. If there is ever some state so unhappy as to arouse the wrath of all five, it may be thrice-armed with the justice of its quarrel and nonetheless condemned by the body which "peace-loving nations" have chosen to guide them. That may be unlikely. As is well known, whatever consensus exists in our world, it does not usually include agreement as to the legitimacy of the immediate objectives of liberalism and communism. However, in the abandonment of any search for the objective criteria for a just war, consensus is still the standard. That a war which a voting majority conceives to be just is not necessarily just goes without saying.

Failing consensus, containment operates as a kind of limited or partial consensus. "Containment," says Osgood, "is directly and immediately concerned with achieving a particular configuration of power; not with punishing aggression or vindicating universal principles of justice and law" (p. 143). Americans are all familiar with the need for such a policy. Yet it tends to obliterate the problem of the just war. We are not permitted to demand that the just war depend on a certain configuration of power or even on the limited consensus of the free world. We are hard on reaching the point where a just war, to modern man, is a war he can win. Politicians have often acted in that way, but the alliance between politicians and scholars is almost brand new. As many of our new realists have pointed out, the policy of containment, and, more particularly, the policy of rollbacks, differ from the configuration of balance of power in that they rest not on national, and

47. *De l'Esprit des Lois*, I, 3.

therefore limited, interest but on a fixed universal alliance and unlimited interest.

The classics, which sought objective criteria for justice, would oppose, in principle, the identification of justice with partisanship. I have already noted that the just course in civil conflict, according to the classics, is usually arbitration. When arbitration fails, an injustice may have to be righted. Should that be so, there is no real reason why it should involve global war. Kennan sees the problem clearly when he expresses his hope that peace is not indivisible, as applied to the Middle East.<sup>48</sup> A war begun to rectify a boundary may conceivably be a just war. Ideological intervention may turn it into an unjust war—and an inhumane global war.

The problem is well and wisely treated in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. When the king appears, unknown before his soldiers, he says that he could die contented in the king's company, because the king's cause is just and his quarrel honorable. He is faced with the answer that this is more than the soldiers know or should seek to know, the soldiers believing that the question of justice is up to the king.<sup>49</sup> Can the soldiers of today leave the question of justice to the Charter, or to the consensus of the free world? However far we have moved toward democracy, decisions are still made by the few and the soldier may still say: "If his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us."<sup>50</sup> The just war is still a just war, and the responsibility of statesmanship is more terrifying than ever.

There is, indeed, another way in which *Henry V* indicates our difficulty. In Chester D. Wilmot's *Struggle for Europe*, he says that a British paratroop general in Flanders on D-Day was heard to quote from *Henry V*: "And gentlemen in England, and abed, / Will think themselves accursed they were not here."

If I may venture a prophecy, no one on a nuclear battlefield, whether strategic or tactical weapons are employed, before or after the struggle, will ever again quote those lines. At least, I hope that foreign policy is not so uncivilized.

48. *Russia, the Atom, and the West*, pp. 78–79.

49. *Henry V*, Act IV, scene 1, lines 125 ff.

50. *Ibid.*, lines 133–35.