

movies, songs and other works assaulting religion and replicating Sade's nihilist labors in depicting murder, torture, sexual perversion, cruelty to women, cannibalism.

Also, if adversarial circles suffer from an inability to find meaning in a secular society, one might expect them to embrace religion. Instead, as Hollander shows, adversarial élites enlist churches in secular causes, thus diluting their spirituality. Such search for meaning as there is usually entails involvement in New Age mysticism. Any return to the Jewish and Christian faiths is occurring among the less-alienated but genuinely perplexed general public, and not among the disaffected élites.

The mental pathologies that Hollander observes among the pilgrims to Nicaragua are more characteristic of Eric Hoffer's fanatical "true believers" than of hapless victims of modernity. Incorporating Hoffer's analysis of the psychology of the true believer would have buttressed Hollander's assertion that anti-Americanism can stem from the critics' "confusion of the personal and social realms." It is even more plausible, in fact, that the strident criticism of America is generated by a nihilistic core of adversarial intellectuals goaded by their own personal pathologies.

Finally, it should be said, this valuable book deserved better editorial support than it received. The lack of a subject index makes reference to the various ideas in such a large and complex work difficult, and a dismaying number of typographical errors blights the text. Also, editing for greater stylistic crispness was in order. Hollander's meticulous scholarship keeps his presentation free from polemical blemishes but, unfortunately, also produces a pedantic and plodding literary style. Still, *Anti-Americanism* is a worthy successor to *Political Pilgrims*, indispensable for students and for political, social, and cultural historians of our time.

The Problem of Order

PETER AUGUSTINE LAWLER

Political Order: Philosophical Anthropology, Modernity, and the Challenge of Ideology, by David J. Levy, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987. 208 pp. \$22.50.

DAVID J. LEVY has written an extremely well-informed, sober, and penetrating book. Despite problems in style and organization, it deserves to be included with the best writing on political theory being done today. Though it considers the problem of political order with remarkable detachment, it is not without the partisanship appropriate to a political theorist or philosopher.

Levy writes on behalf of the perpetuation of political life, which is indispensable for the perpetuation of human life. He moves from the pure theorist's irresponsible detachment to the mature perspective of the statesman, or, more precisely, the theorist who writes to provide guidance to statesmen. Because he is not a statesman but a political theorist, he limits himself to articulating problems and not to proposing solutions. Solutions require a certainty and a rhetoric which Levy does not possess, and which, from his perspective, do not even seem possible. He appears to come close to but in his sobriety shies away from the conclusion of the mature Martin Heidegger that only a god can save us now.

Levy defines his perspective as that of "an ontologically aware philosophical anthropology," a combination of the thought of Nicholai Hartmann, Max Scheler, Eric Voegelin, Hans Jonas, and, more than he acknowledges, Heidegger. His combination of social science and philosophy, which is more social science than philosophy, is meant to produce the moderation that comes through the mixture of extremes. His analysis

includes criticisms of the excesses of both Voegelin and Heidegger, which, especially in Voegelin's case, do not diminish Levy's appreciation of and reliance on their greatness.

The purpose of much of the book is to show that the human condition is "ontologically fixed." The species exists within constraints that cannot be overcome. Not every possibility is open to human beings, because they not only must live in a certain way in order to survive but also must die. As long as they remain human they will be aware of their deficiencies, including their mortality, and create in response to them.

Levy goes on to distinguish between "the constant features of the human condition" and the idea of "absolute ontological changelessness." Human existence comes into being and passes away within nature, which supplies no support for what is distinctively human about the species. Levy's analysis stresses the contingency of human existence within nature and the cosmos. He even faces up to the contingency of nature, the fact that it, too, has a history, a beginning, changes, and, presumably, an end.

The idea of eternity, for Levy, belongs to discredited ontologies. The rejection of the world's eternity, he knows, might point to the plausibility of a creationist metaphysics, and he devotes a brief discussion to its possibility. But he says that his analysis of the "necessities" of "the space of politics" need not depend on metaphysical or religious speculation at all. He even calls on the authority of Saint Thomas Aquinas for this limitation of his inquiry. He also refuses to consider the credibility of eschatological possibilities in our time.

Still, Levy knows that human beings, to remain human, need to come to terms with questions of ultimate origin and destiny. He quotes Jonas to the effect that the image of man depends upon the image of God. Is his implicit conclusion

that his restriction of his inquiry into the problem of human existence is somehow an inhuman one? The social scientist necessarily writes as a very modern conservative. Is he part of the problem he describes? This question is not meant as a criticism, but as a testimony to Levy's independence and integrity.

Levy writes, really, about two problems of political order. The first is "perennial and inexhaustible." It is perennial because, wherever human beings exist, they must create political order to compensate for "the absence of instinctual guidance." They must create because in "purely organic terms" they are "unfitted for survival in the world." The problem of political order is inexhaustible because every human creation only "can be maintained in being by human care." Human order is always "fragile." It lacks the "ontological security" of "the organically founded orders of animal society."

The second problem of politics is new to our time. What distinguishes our modern time is both the stunning ability of technology to magnify human power, and its failure, despite ideological promises, to change the human condition, to accomplish the impossible. This "apparent," but only apparent, "subjugation of nature to will" has all but destroyed man's sense of living in a world with an "ontologically given order," one which imposes upon him limits and direction beyond his control.

Pre-modern ontologies always expressed the truth that the human condition is limited and dependent. But they never understood that insight as Levy usually does, primarily with reference to the self-preservation and flourishing of the species. Human order was understood as a response to a transcendent reality, to what was beyond and yet above human existence. The political order was either identical to or below the theological one. Human order was not understood to be a fundamentally human creation.

The technological world view, in Levy's mind, expresses the truth about the contingency of human existence in the cosmos. But it views that condition as something to be overcome. It forgets that man as man must remain limited and dependent and that he must create political order. This forgetfulness, which Levy does not make clear enough, occurs as a way of suppressing the miserable experience of human contingency. The modern technological and ideological projects are, as Pascal explained, diversions. The denial of transcendence is based upon the conviction that it does not really exist. The human longings that point to its existence must, in the name of truth and contentment, be overcome.

Perhaps it is this thought that causes Levy to see the inadequacy of his conclusion that the creation of political order must be calculated or "theoretical." It is hard to see how such calculated creations can be psychologically satisfying to beings who are material and spiritual. The technological world view, for this reason and others, unleashed political fantasies about human transformation or, more precisely, redirects those fantasies from some other world to this historical one.

Levy seems to come to this conclusion when he understands Voegelin's use of the term gnostic to signify a constituent part of the human condition. Human beings seem to need a certain knowledge that is not really humanly available, and they cannot help having a "radical dissatisfaction with the conditions of mundane existence." Levy speculates that such "a state of existential dissatisfaction" is part of what is required for "the survival of a species that needs to transform its environment if it is to flourish."

Technology and politics both come into being in response to existential dissatisfaction. Both are necessary for human perpetuation and flourishing. Yet the survival of the species also seems to

require that human beings believe that they cannot create a remedy for that dissatisfaction. That belief, in turn, seems to depend on the belief in a transcendent remedy or satisfaction. It is the lack of such a belief that produces the extremism of what Levy calls the "new politics."

Such politics, which he calls "a precise equivalent to the modern technological project," aims at the "ontological transformation" of "nature and human nature." Given contemporary man's great power, the projects this politics generates threaten the very existence of an environment that is required for human existence. The ecological movement, properly understood, is a profoundly conservative counter-movement to the politics of world transformation or conquest. Human beings have no choice now but to acknowledge the limitations of their existence and to take responsibility for the future of nature.

In contrast to political order, the future of nature has only very recently become dependent on human care. And it has become dependent as a result of projects opposed to the caution or circumspection that care implies. The biblical idea of stewardship assumes decisive relevance at a time when the ontology or theology it implies seems incredible. Levy explains that a "liberty" or rights-informed populace, which barely deserves the name citizenry, is unlikely to be persuaded to take responsibility for anything except personal satisfaction. He shows the necessity and the seeming impossibility of a well-grounded and effective ecological movement.

But the destruction of their natural environment is not the only way that human beings can bring about their own self-destruction. Levy notes that the "technological developments in communications and genetic engineering" have made "postpolitical existence" an historical possibility. It would not be a movement to some higher form of being, but

“an induced reversion to the prereflective totalitarianism of organically transmitted instinct.” The behaviorists, Levy seems to say, are more clear-sighted than the Marxists.

Human beings, he observes, actually seem to be in the process of deliberately surrendering their humanity. He calls attention to the seemingly indefinite expansion of childhood in Western culture, as well as the increasingly childish demands of those who are physiologically adults. The movement of welfare-state politics is toward a simple formula: “The child demands, the institution supplies.” One problem is that without some maturity, or moderation of desire and acceptance of responsibility, the institution cannot, in the long run, supply. The only effective solution, as Tocqueville predicted, may be to induce people to surrender what remains of their humanity so as to secure their contentment.

Doubtlessly the danger of the new politics does not disappear with the recent collapse of socialist ideology. The Greens, whom Levy mentions briefly near the end of his book, seem to me more dangerous than the Reds, more likely to triumph in the long run. Their anti-political fantasies are no less misanthropic than those of the socialists. Their movement, of course, is not truly ecological in Levy’s eyes, for it does not aim at the conservation of humanity. But there is no use denying that the disappearance of humanity, or the excesses caused by the human perception of contingency, would be good for nature.

Levy concludes with the thought that the sober analysis of the social scientist is insufficient to revitalize human life and political order. The extreme responses to existential dissatisfaction liberated by the perception of the death of God can only be moderated by a return of political order’s dependence on a response to transcendent experience. The social scientist cannot supply what is beyond his

competence and what he appears not even to have.

The Church: Crisis and Promise

JOHN-PETER PHAM

The Church: Pilgrim of Centuries, by
Thomas Molnar, *Grand Rapids,*
Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990. x + 182 pp.
\$15.95.

AMONG HIS MANY articles and books, two of Professor Thomas Molnar’s works in political philosophy stand out as succinct introductions to his thought. His *Politics and the State* (1980) outlined the three “respectable” frameworks in American political thought—the *Federalist Papers*, Leo Strauss, and Eric Voegelin—as well as a fourth, marginal framework—Marxism. After detailing how these theoretical modes all somehow fail to include some of the essential ingredients of both Western experience and theory, Molnar presented a fifth theory which contained all the ingredients of theory and practice, the Catholic conception of politics which repudiates both the extreme individualism of liberalism and the collectivism which is its *reductio ad absurdum*. Molnar advocated a *via media* based on Church and state as symbiotic framework for civil society:

Church and state need each other, for the good life of the individual and society that both supply by means of integrity and progress.

The Church leans in the direction of the individual person, with his unique and uniquely valuable soul; the state leans in the direction of the community as guarantor of the public good Neither neglects the aspect which is second on its agenda: the Church is corporation, and the state upholds the citizen’s rights