

The Ethical Problem of Democratic Statecraft

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In the following article, Claes G. Ryn evaluates the possibility of effective and ethical statecraft by democratic governments in a hostile world. Drawing on Walter Lippmann, Ryn criticizes populist or "plebiscitary" democracy, in which foreign policy decisions are largely shaped by the whims of public opinion. Instead, Ryn endorses a constitutional system where elected representatives have real leeway in dealing with foreign and domestic challenges. Ryn also criticizes abstract notions of morality that forbid democratic states from dealing with challenges posed by unscrupulous authoritarian and totalitarian societies.

To be more than superficial, reflection about politics must in some way address the problem of ethics and hence consider politics in relation to man's ultimate well-being. In the history of political thought, attempts to bypass or dismiss this problem have sometimes enjoyed wide influence, but these attempts have never succeeded in heading off renewed affirmations of an ethical imperative in politics. In the Western world, the traditions of Plato and Aristotle, Rome, Judaism and Christianity have kept alive a sense of the necessity of subjecting political action to ethical scrutiny and direction.

Plato and Aristotle argued in somewhat different ways that the central purpose of politics is to serve man's moral end, the good life of community. To both thinkers, the Greek city-state, the *polis*, seemed particularly suited to inducing in man the moral discipline which is a prerequisite of genuine social harmony and individual happiness. Cicero, while adjusting his thought to Roman circumstances, saw a similar need for holding politics to a moral standard. Incorporating and revising these classical perspectives, Christianity introduced the idea of a specifically religious sphere beyond politics, the "things of God," to be held distinct and immune from the designs of statecraft, from the "things of Caesar."¹ This distinction is a central source for the old Western idea of moral limits to the exercise of political power. In general, the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions have sought to rid politics of arbitrary and merely self-seeking action. There should be between rulers and ruled a sense of shared moral responsibility, of partnership in the purposes of the good society. Politics should serve its high moral end partly through the guidance and restraint of law. In the modern era, these traditions have been strongly challenged by doctrines which reject the idea of a permanent principle of Right. Moral relativism pronounces morality to be merely a creation of historical convention or personal preference, and nihilism rejects all moral authority. Yet, influences of that type have not quite managed to destroy a traditional concern for the moral quality of politics. Some modern themes, such as the importance of individual conscience and individual freedom, have actually stimulated a needed deepening and rearticulation of older beliefs. The classical and Judeo-Christian traditions have to some extent been adapted to and enriched by changing historical circumstances and new theoretical emphases.

In today's Western world, it is natural to relate the subject of ethics and politics to the circumstances of democracy. That form of government is often viewed as respecting higher standards of conduct than other regimes. But democracies must also compete with other states, some of which may be hostile to democratic principles. It might seem that democracies under pressure from less scrupulous powers face the problem of morality in an acute form. A nagging issue of considerable ethical interest is whether the preservation of democracy in a sometimes threatening international and domestic environment is compatible with consistent adherence to the exacting standards of the form of government. A more fundamental question is whether the survival of states is compatible with unfailing respect for moral norms. The problems faced by democracies in the conduct and formulation of foreign policy offer a convenient contemporary context for dealing with that question.

To address adequately the moral dimension of democracy and foreign affairs, it is necessary to give attention to several interconnected issues. First of all, a working definition of the term "morality" is needed. An attempt must be made to define the higher good of human life with reference to which morality can be understood. Is there a quality of existence which satisfies man's deepest longing, one which truly makes life worth living? One may call a society which is particularly conducive to that quality of life the good society and call actions which promote that life moral.

The possibility of a human existence of this kind must deeply affect our conception of democracy: One can imagine forms of popular government which are more or less conducive to man's higher good. These forms are bound to differ also in the conduct of foreign policy. Consequently, we must take up the very definition of democracy. Only after examining the meaning of morality and democracy can these be adequately related to the special problems of foreign affairs. As our argument develops, it will become clear that these subjects cannot be separated but come together in the same question—the nature of man. Upon our understanding of that nature depends our understanding of morality in politics, including foreign policy. By a somewhat circuitous route we shall eventually arrive at a thesis regarding the meaning of morality in politics, not only in democratic foreign policy, but in all politics.

THE GOOD FOR MAN

In trying to define morality, we shall build in large part on the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions in ethics which have decisively shaped Western civilization, and not least American society. There emerges from these traditions a view of human nature and the higher good of which man is capable. This consensus does not exclude some tensions and disagreements. Over the centuries, Western civilization has incorporated into its central traditions elements which have revised or transformed earlier views. But it has also maintained a basic continuity regarding the nature and purpose of man, which can be said to define its essence. Because of that core of beliefs and corresponding ways of life, one can speak, even in our own century, of ideas and practices that undermine or threaten Western civilization.

The traditional Western view of man and society, shared to a large extent by old non-Western cultures, stresses the existence of universal values to which man needs to adjust his individuality for the sake of his happiness. Just as there are types of thought and action which by their very nature serve to poison man's existence, so are there types of thought and action which tend to lift his spirit and satisfy his innermost longing. To achieve a genuine and lasting well-being, man needs to discover and act upon impersonal norms for the practical, intellectual and aesthetical enrichment of life. There is first of all the imperative of *moral goodness*, the supreme value in which man finds his deepest satisfaction and in terms of which all other goods are therefore finally measured. Moral goodness is the power which pulls

man's actions in the direction of truly humane relationships, toward a state of community. This principle for the fundamental harmonization and harmony of human life is referred to variously as "love," "friendship," "brotherhood" or the like. Within the Western religious traditions, the principle of ultimate good is closely associated with the will of a personal God, but there are also nonreligious forms of this affirmation of a transcendent principle of human happiness.

Secondly, men seek *knowledge* about their own existence. They achieve a special type of community, an intellectual affinity and unity, in so far as they genuinely seek and respect the truth. The Western tradition places a high value on the development of reason, first of all because intellectual illumination of life is indispensable to the pursuit of man's ethical end, but also because it makes possible a more general betterment of man's condition.

Thirdly, men are able to enrich their common life through various aesthetical activities—poetry, painting, sculpture, music, etc. These are governed by the imperative of *beauty*. Man's aesthetical efforts, too, can be seen as indirectly serving the end of moral goodness, but more generally they serve to refine the sensibilities of the human community.

Because material well-being is a highly desirable basis for the realization of the values of goodness, truth and beauty, Western civilization has also promoted virtues of thrift and energy. In the modern world, with its heavy stress on material goods and with its unprecedented economic growth, the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions become reminders that economic production is not an end in itself but a means to the moral, intellectual and aesthetical enhancement of life.

But the Western heritage also stresses that man is an imperfect creature, torn between opposing potentialities of good and evil. At the heart of the human personality, and therefore of society at large, is the permanent struggle against desires which seek the individual's advantage at the expense of others. Man is forever up against forces of his own making which militate against all community and all higher values. He sometimes finds a perverse pleasure in conduct which defiles his own higher potential. For example, he may delight in tyrannizing over others. He may indulge his appetites beyond all shame and without every concern for the well-being of others. In the intellectual life, he is prone to prejudice, illusion, superstition and premature certainty. Aesthetically, the temptation of the crude, the artless, the pornographic is always present. While man may find more or less intense pleasure in degrading acts, the leading moral authorities of the West are agreed that this behavior also brings a deeper feeling of self-loathing, finally a chronic sense of the misery and absurdity of life.

The outcome in particular generations of the permanent struggle between the imperatives of genuine civilization and opposing inclinations can decide the fate of society. Man rises to a level of some dignity only through protracted effort and the support of the civilized society. A lasting sense of meaningful existence, as distinguished from passing moments of pleasure, comes only with behavior that respects the high, impersonal standards of good.

Human nature being what it is, no final victory for goodness, truth and beauty is possible. But here and there societies appear whose norms and practices help man to limit his tendency to evil, ignorance and ugliness. Here and there man lifts himself in the direction of an intrinsically satisfying life. In the good, or "civilized," society, men's diverse activities are, as it were, symphonically harmonized by the purpose of moral good. Through this integration of personal and social life man realizes his higher nature. The growth and advance of civilization consists in the wider and deeper sharing in the values of goodness, truth and beauty, and in economic well-being as a means to these.

According to the old Western traditions, the universal values of civilization are more important than even individual survival. It is life of a certain quality, not mere existence on any terms, that commands the allegiance of the civilized man. In fact,

he shows his civilized nature by being willing to risk his own personal existence for what is even more important.

Provided democracy is understood as based upon, and as structured to promote, the universal values just discussed, it is possible to view that form of government as an outgrowth and continuation of the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions, although not without the addition of some distinctively modern ingredients. In this perspective, democracy can be seen as a way of making the values of civilization the most widely accessible and of enlisting the largest possible number of people in the effort of deepening those values. According to this view, the health and survival of democracy depends on keeping the values of civilization strong.

If the great task of civilization is forever threatened from within by man's recurrent failure to undertake the difficult discipline which is necessary to the goal of happiness, it is also threatened from without by powers which scorn this conception of man's nature and destiny and seek to impose their own will. In the modern world, Naziism and Marxism-Leninism are examples of a radical departure from traditional notions of civilization. The official ideology of states like the Soviet Union is a materialistic view of man and society and an emphatic rejection of any transcendent standard of right. A practical manifestation of this outlook is a foreign policy of a government whose stated objectives is the destruction of Western society as we know it.

To summarize the argument of this section, the measure of civilization is the extent to which man is helped to develop those of his potentialities which make life truly worth living. The magnet which pulls the activities of civilization together and gives them their ultimate justification and meaning is the value of moral goodness. Good actions are those which are centrally concerned with protecting, spreading and deepening this quality of being. The threat to civilization comes from all of those forces—intellectual and aesthetical as well as practical and political—which, whatever their promises and pretenses, actually bring needless human suffering and degradation.

TWO FORMS OF DEMOCRACY

The time has come to relate the idea of morality and the good society to the definition of democracy. It is frequently overlooked that the term "democracy" can be understood in very different ways. The same term is used to denote forms of government which are quite incompatible and which imply vastly divergent views of human nature and society. It is crucial in the present context to make a distinction between what may be called constitutional democracy and plebiscitary democracy. The former can be seen as largely a manifestation or development of the traditions that have just been described. Popular government as it has existed in the United States, for example, is intricately intertwined with those traditions.² Plebiscitary democracy, on the other hand, has its major origins in the eighteenth century and is based on assumptions that clash with the older view of man and society.

One's view of human nature inevitably affects one's understanding of government. A highly optimistic view of man's capacity for goodness and wisdom is likely to predispose a person toward giving the great mass of men a good deal of influence, perhaps unlimited influence, over their own personal affairs and the life of society as a whole. This is the strong inclination of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the French moralist and political thinker whose ideas helped inspire the French Revolution of 1789. Rousseau provides the theoretical foundation for what is here called plebiscitary democracy. Starting from a belief in the natural, original goodness of man, Rousseau envisions a new political system that gives the people, or more precisely, their numerical majority, unlimited power. By contrast, a deeply pessimistic view of man is likely to produce distrust of man's capacity for self-government and a

preference for some form of authoritarian rule. This is the strong tendency of the author of *Leviathan*, the English thinker Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). According to Hobbes, life without unlimited political sovereignty, preferably placed in the hands of a single ruler, would be an intolerable state of war of all against all.

The classical and Judeo-Christian view of human nature recognizes both higher and lower potentialities in man. He is seen as capable of self-government to the extent that he is able to overcome selfishness, ignorance and short-sightedness, and can rise in the direction of wisdom and civilized conduct. This view of man may lead, in favorable historical circumstances, to endorsement of constitutional democracy. That form of government trusts the great mass of the people enough to give them major influence over public policy but also distrusts them enough to limit and channel their power by means of constitutional restraints and representative institutions.

The contrast between the two conceptions of popular government needs to be developed further. According to the plebiscitary notion, democracy should be designed so as to permit the quick and faithful implementation of the current opinions of the people. Rousseau insists that the people must be fully in charge of policy and subject to no constitutional checks. The current wish of the majority must itself be the law. While the people may select officials to carry out their intentions, legislative representation in the determination of the popular will is unacceptable. Representation of that kind is a way of depriving the people of their rightful power and freedom. Rousseau believes that genuine popular sovereignty is possible only in a small republic in which all the citizens can participate personally in the making of laws.³ Descendants of the Rousseauistic spirit living in large modern societies usually recognize the necessity of some kind of elected representatives who can act for the people. However, every precaution must be taken to ensure that those representatives will faithfully carry out the wishes of those who elected them. Anything less is a betrayal of popular sovereignty. Among the ways of ensuring close government adherence to the current popular will are short terms of office for elected representatives, the possible recall or censure of public officials, and referenda on issues of public policy.

Even though today's plebiscitary democrats may not share all of Rousseau's ideas, they are joined to him by their deep distrust of everything that limits or dilutes the influence of the present popular majority. A large modern literature of plebiscitary inspiration portrays popular regimes, like the American, as a barely masked attempt to thwart or circumvent the wishes of the people. The title of a widely read book about American government, *The Deadlock of Democracy*, conveys the plebiscitary impatience with American constitutional and representative structures.

Constitutional democracy, too, establishes rule by the people, but it does not identify the will of the people with the majority sentiment of the moment. There is little reason to believe that the best, long-term interest of the people is most likely to be expressed in the most recent opinion poll. It is entirely possible that the majority of the moment is dominated by prejudice and ignorance, perhaps under the influence of superficial or biased mass media or demagogic politicians. The majority may also succumb to blatant self-seeking. Constitutional democracy, therefore, adopts popular rule under self-imposed constitutional restraints. The people in such a democracy do not desire to be governed according to their opinions of the moment. They support laws and institutions which will promote responsible, well-informed policies. The people adopt constitutional restraints and representative institutions in part to arm themselves against their own possible moments of weakness and recklessness.

In a constitutional democracy, representation is not viewed as undermining popular rule but as a means of discerning and articulating the will of the people. This notion of representation is endorsed in the *Federalist Papers*. In the words of James Madison, the purpose of representation is

to refine and enlarge the public views by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations. Under such a regulation it may well happen that the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves. . . .

Constitutional democracy sees nothing objectionable in temporary deviations by elected or nonelected representatives from present popular opinion. The American Constitution deliberately gives many officeholders considerable independence in relation to the majority of the moment, for example, by giving them long terms of office—six years for senators, four years for presidents. Members of the Supreme Court are given lifetime tenure. True representation, according to the constitutional form of democracy, is not a process of carrying out the instructions of the momentary majority. The popular representative owes those who elected him his best judgment. He would betray his trust if he allowed his conscience and knowledge to be overpowered by their passions of the moment. A genuine representative is willing to go against what he considers mistaken or dangerous opinions. He does so in the hope that a few years hence his constituents will recognize and praise not only his foresight but his courage and integrity in resisting their pressures."

The purpose of constitutional democracy, then, is not to make government a close reflection of whatever popular wishes or media opinions predominate at a particular moment. The current majority has no monopoly on virtue and insight; indeed, they may be dangerously wrong. Constitutional democracy seeks to be guided, rather, by the people's "deliberate sense," the general views that the people would hold if they had had the opportunity to reflect on important issues for an extended period and in a manner marked by judiciousness, calm and moral conscience. The true interests of the people are seen as emerging over time, through a partnership between the electorate and their representatives. A preference for popular rule under self-imposed constitutional procedures and restraints is itself an expression of that long-term deliberate sense of the people. By sanctioning their Constitution for two centuries, the American people have emphatically endorsed a constitutional government as the best way of ascertaining their will.

Constitutional democracy is sufficiently respectful of the great mass of people in a country such as the United States to invite broad popular participation in the making of public policy. But it is also sufficiently distrustful of human nature to see the need for constitutional checks, not only on the majority of the moment, but on those who have been chosen to govern.

DEMOCRACY AND CIVILIZATION

To the extent that the classical and Judeo-Christian view of human nature survives in democratic thought, the will of the people is not defined apart from the universal standards of human good described earlier. It is assumed that popular government must be structured and informed by such ideas and practices that man's higher nature will be respected and promoted. Constitutional democracy can be seen as the democratic form of the old attempt to reconcile government with the need to serve the good, the true and the beautiful.

In this perspective, democracy cannot dispense with moral and other training of its citizens. On the contrary, it must make a greater effort of that type than any other form of government. The reason is that democracy wants to give the entire adult population some considerable influence on the making of public policy. According to the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions, only those who have risen to a level of civilized conduct are capable and worthy of self-government. Democracy in a meaningful sense is a realistic possibility, therefore, only in a people of consid-

erable moral and cultural achievement. As defined with reference to the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions, or to their counterparts in non-Western cultures, the institutions of constitutional democracy do not assume that all values are subjective or merely conventional. Such features of American democracy as universal suffrage, constitutional restraints on government, separation of power, due process of law, legal protection for the individual and his associations, and freedom of speech are not provided to encourage and serve an open-ended, value-neutral freedom. By definition, the civilized society is imbued with a sense of the general direction in which goodness, truth and beauty are to be sought; but these values have never been definitively attained and must be pursued in forever-changing historical circumstances by unique individuals facing special new problems. No single individual or group of individuals has a monopoly on understanding or promoting the common good. All citizens have some capacity, however limited, for contributing to the work of civilization, and they need freedom to be able to exercise their creativity and assert their personality. If there is also a need for ordering and limiting their freedom through laws and social mores, it is because no person is immune to the temptation of arbitrary, self-serving action which may hurt the good of the whole as well as the individual himself.

The purpose of constitutional democracy, in so far as it continues and develops the Western heritage, is to promote the growth of the moral, intellectual and aesthetic life and the widest possible sharing in the work and the fruits of civilization. Democratic freedoms and rights are not unlimited and open-ended, but are means to, and therefore appropriately structured by, the ends of the good society.

DEMOCRACY AND SURVIVAL

Having defined the ideas of human good and democracy in relation to each other, we are in a position to take up the problem of political morality as it relates to democracy and foreign policy. Our discussion may be moved toward the central moral issue by exploring some of the implications of the preceding analysis for thinking about democracy and national security.

It is often suggested that in the conduct of foreign policy, and especially when it comes to using military means, democracies are at a distinct disadvantage compared to authoritarian or totalitarian states. Principles like freedom of debate and association, openness of information, due process of law, and the consent of the governed reduce the effectiveness and speed with which democracies can deal with threats to their own security. In particular, the dependence of democratic governments on public opinion is said to greatly complicate their task.

An incisive commentator on this subject is the social thinker Walter Lippmann (1889-1974), who is perhaps also the most prominent American political journalist of this century. A close and long-time student of the challenges facing Western democracy, Lippmann gave particular attention to the role of public opinion in the making of foreign policy before, during and after the Second World War. In his famous book *The Public Philosophy* (1955), Lippmann diagnosed "a sickness of the Western liberal democracies."⁸ A deep social and political disorder, having its roots in spreading moral confusion and decadence, was preventing the democracies from understanding the seriousness of the external and internal threats to their continued existence and preventing them from acting effectively against them. The dangerous state of democracy was nowhere more evident than in the growing fickleness and superficiality of public opinion and in the increasing subjection of governments to that opinion. Politicians of genuine knowledge and foresight, warning of dangers, were increasingly unwelcome and likely to be drowned in waves of escapist rhetoric obligingly generated by self-serving demagogues. The early and repeated warnings by Winston Churchill regarding the nature and intentions of Hitler and Nazi Ger-

many were long overpowered by soothing sentiments of political accommodation and pacifism. Churchill's warnings were finally heeded by his country when it was too late, when no doubt could any longer remain about the designs of Hitler and about the naivete of previous policies. And then the only available course of action was fighting a world war.

Unfortunate developments within the Western democracies, Lippmann argues, have had the effect of discouraging the wise and knowledgeable from speaking out. "The general rule is that a democratic politician had better not be right too soon. Very often the penalty is political death." It is safer to keep in step with the parade of public opinion than to speak to the real needs of society. Because of the decline of political culture, public men are forever in danger of their political lives. "With exceptions so rare that they are regarded as miracles and freaks of nature, successful democratic politicians are insecure and intimidated men. They advance politically only as they placate, appease, bribe, seduce, bamboozle or otherwise manage to manipulate the demanding and threatening elements in their constituencies." This servitude to shifting popular passions is symptomatic of a malady of civilization which can have the gravest consequences for the future of democracy. The malady can be "deadly to the very survival of the state as a free society," Lippmann asserts, "if, when the great and hard issues of war and peace, of security and solvency, of revolution and order are up for decision, the executive and judicial departments, with their civil servants and technicians, have lost their power to decide."⁴

At the core of democracy's problems is the gradual abandonment of what Lippmann calls "the public philosophy," a term largely synonymous with what has here been referred to as the essence of the Western heritage. The result of that abandonment is the unleashing of self-indulgence in various forms and the fragmentation of society. Without the sense of a higher common purpose to guide society domestically and internationally, men are increasingly ruled by their private wishes of the moment. Governments become the servants of shifting majorities consisting of temporary alliances of partisan interests. Lippmann points out that democratic politicians "rationalize this servitude by saying that in a democracy public men are servants of the people."¹⁰ But this disingenuous attitude merely signifies a betrayal of public trust. Popular confusion and clamor and the corresponding pandering by government officials to the popular whims of the moment are the political manifestations of the destruction of the ethical and cultural foundations of genuine democracy.

As we have seen, serving the current wishes of the people is not the essential purpose of constitutional democracy. Democracy of that type presupposes and expresses a general outlook on life of the kind that we have associated with the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions. The difficulties described by Walter Lippmann are those of a popular government sliding in the direction of plebiscitary democracy.

If Lippmann is right in insisting that democracy must have the capacity for decisive, effective and responsible action in international affairs in order to survive, constitutional democracy is best equipped to meet that need. But that form of popular government can work well only in an environment of civilization as previously explained. The necessary independence and responsible leadership of government officials presuppose a willingness on the part of the citizens to give their representatives the benefit of the doubt. There must be a sense of partnership between the great mass of the people and their government. Such a relationship of mutual trust assumes some general agreement on the central purposes of society, a shared belief in lasting higher values, a common good, with reference to which government officials and those they serve can be seen to act selflessly. The people will tolerate deviations by the government from their current opinions only if they recognize the existence of such higher values and recognize in their officials a superior competence and dedication deserving of some considerable leeway.

If, by contrast, the citizens become chronically unsure of the meaning of their own lives and of the purposes of society, if they have little capacity for self-restraint and are easily swayed by demagogic appeals to their appetites and fears, the integrity and independence of government officials will not long be tolerated. Real trust cannot exist within society if there is no belief in a good beyond subjective interests and man is viewed, instead, as inherently a selfish being. The social consensus must eventually break down. Temporary majority coalitions based on enlightened self-interest cannot provide the direction and permanence necessary in foreign policy. The demand for plebiscitary adherence to the majority coalition of the moment, and the corresponding role of demagogic politicians forever ready to score political gains, subjects democracy to just the sort of dangers described by Lippmann.

An effective and responsible democratic foreign policy, then, is dependent upon strengthening the ethical and cultural ethos that makes constitutional democracy possible. Popular self-rule is the most demanding of all forms of government. To have a realistic chance of survival for the longer term, democracy must be exceptionally attentive to the need for moral and cultural education and self-education among the citizens. Because of the special danger that comes from abuse of democratic freedom and rights, neglect of that old task of civilization uniquely exposes democracy to extinction.

POLITICAL MORALITY REEXAMINED

To associate the survival of democracy with maintaining high moral and cultural principles perhaps seems paradoxical. How can a regime wedded to such noble purposes survive in competition with more unscrupulous powers? Discussions of ethics and politics typically cite the relations between states as being particularly resistant to moral principle. Where the security and central ambitions of states are involved, violations of moral norms should come as no surprise. If democracy is conceived as aspiring to the highest standards of conduct, how could it withstand the pressures of states which are contemptuous of its norms of behavior and prepared to act ruthlessly? In order to answer that question, the notion of morality tentatively developed above must be expanded upon.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527), the Italian political thinker and statesman, poses a fundamental challenge to the classical and Christian view that politics must seek to conform to a moral standard. Machiavelli argues that moralistic attitudes on the part of rulers may bring ruin upon their states. A statesman deserving of the name must be prepared to break moral norms if the protection of the state requires it. This does not mean that the good ruler should seek a reputation for being immoral. In fact, given the conventional norms of society, it is useful, even necessary, to seem to possess some of the traditional virtues. But for the ruler actually to always practice them is dangerous. Machiavelli writes, "It is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious, and also to be so; but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you must be able to change to the opposite qualities." Whenever necessary to safeguard the state, the ruler "must be able to do evil."¹¹

The apparent immoralism and cynicism of Machiavelli has drawn sharp criticism from representatives of the older traditions: Principles of morality cannot, as Machiavelli seems to believe, be abandoned in politics. Defenders of Machiavelli, on the other hand, have insisted that he is drawing attention to practical realities and imperatives which were not adequately understood or discussed by the ancient or Christian writers. This debate continues to the present day. Machiavellian "realism" has not managed to root out the old tradition of political ethics, and neither has the latter managed to silence those who argue for "realistic" political thought and action.¹²

What is one to make of the persistence of the debate between "realists" and "moralists"? One reason for its persistence is surely that there is in man a self that simply delights, perversely, in the ruthless exercise of power and in dominating others—or merely the contemplation of action of that type. In Machiavelli one senses not just an admirable willingness to face up to the nature of politics as actually practiced, but also the imaginative thrill of possible freedom from moral restraint. The permanence of man's more or less secret attraction to the ruthless and the cruel guarantees the recurrence in political discourse of immoralistic themes. And yet, one must reject as simplistic the view that the debate between moralists and realists is in the end a debate between good and evil. The presence of men of knowledge and civilized dispositions on both sides suggests another possibility, namely, that neither side has adequately confronted the heart of the matter.

We propose the following thesis: The continued Machiavellian challenge to moralism is justified and sustained by a failure on the part of moralism to rid itself of a tendency that militates against effective political action; this tendency, we suggest, is also morally questionable. We may refer to two aspects of this tendency as legalistic moralism and hypermoralism. The moralism in question associates morality with strict and unchangeable rules of conduct or with some model of the perfect society. These norms are conceived in the abstract, that is, apart from historical circumstances. The application of abstract or inflexible moral norms to politics has been no more than a tendency within the old Western tradition, but it has sometimes been strong enough to explain some of the realist impatience with morality in general. In the modern world, this type of moralism has been reinforced by and blended with insistence on purported individual human rights, for example, of the type listed in the UN Declaration of Human Rights. What was once a mere propensity for moral abstractions is often greatly exaggerated in the modern versions. At the same time, the substance of morality has been redefined.

The special type of political moralism under discussion usually exhibits a strong self-righteousness. It follows a paradoxical, and revealing, logic: Morality is conceived in such a way that to practice it is to expose society to the forces that are hostile to morality. If actually adhered to, legalistic moralism and hypermoralism tend to invite the defeat of the values of the civilized society, specifically those of democracy. In its insistence on following certain rules of conduct—for example, an admonition of truthfulness and a prohibition against any form of deceit—legalistic moralism may forbid the state to use clandestine activities and espionage. To give an example of the same general tendency in its hypermoralist mode, a person may decide to disregard the long Christian tradition which distinguishes between the things of God and the things of Caesar. He may then apply the exacting religious standard of the Sermon on the Mount to government, insisting that those in charge of the state should turn the other cheek to those who threaten the state by force. Anything less is alleged to be a betrayal of morality.¹³

Serious doubts can be raised about a conception of morality which tends, in practice, to undermine or defeat the larger purposes of morality. If morality is not such as to protect and promote the cause of the good society in the world of concrete human action, then morality is hardly appropriate to politics, as Machiavelli seems to suggest. If there be such a thing as political morality, it must be different from legalistic moralism or hypermoralism. We propose this basic definition: *Morality, whether in politics or elsewhere, manifests itself in those actions which, in given circumstances, most effectively advance the values of civilization* (as defined above). The spirit of morality does not reveal itself in preconceived, static norms of conduct but in actions which resourcefully and flexibly meet the challenges of historical circumstance by making the best of them. The moral good is a living, dynamic imperative in tune with both the change and the permanence of human existence.

To the extent that democracy tries to advance morality, its aims cannot be frozen in particular principles allowing for no exceptions or adjustments to emerging cir-

cumstances. During the Second World War, the Western democracies adjusted to the situation by limiting the freedom of the press and by imposing other restrictions on civil liberties. To call these and similar measures immoral or undemocratic and hence, unacceptable, regardless of prevailing conditions, is to be prepared to risk the destruction of the state for the sake of abstract principles.

A democracy which genuinely aspires to civilized values will of course promote adherence to the law and due process whenever possible. Constitutional democracy, we have seen, recognizes the need for law both to restrain man's capacity for evil and to encourage his capacity for good. And yet, the good society cannot be summed up once and for all in a particular legal code or set of moral rules. Beyond all good laws and rules may be discerned the transcendent purpose of civilization. That purpose must be honored and advanced also in the most threatening and unfavorable circumstances. Then morality may require of the defenders of civilization something other than strict adherence to law and due process. In some especially dangerous circumstances, the ethical imperative may actually require of responsible political leaders that they break the law to better protect the state, perhaps preferably behind a facade of lawabidingness so as not to harm too much that centrally important principle. In order to uphold the principle of respect for law, even in situations involving war, espionage, etc., a society may try to anticipate and define the circumstances in which some laws can be legally set aside. Even so, the needs of morality cannot be captured in advance in a network of rules.

Morality, then, while it needs laws and other rules to advance its own purpose, also transcends them. The spirit of good is a sense of direction which must be honored differently depending on the demands of circumstance. The ultimate superiority of morality to manmade law is expressed in Plato's *Republic*. Socrates says of the person of exceptional character, who has truly set his soul in order, that he or she "will be ready for action of any kind."¹⁴ The person of truly just moral character does not anxiously consult some external set of rules for guidance. To need such rules is a sign of still-lacking genuine moral character and autonomy. And yet, even a person having the rare moral elevation described by Socrates may respect even the most flawed of the laws of the state, if at all possible, for the sake of the value of lawabidingness.

The legalistic moralist, by contrast, conceives of the ultimate standard of good as a set of rules which must be consulted, to determine whether he and others are behaving correctly. Inner moral uncertainty craves the certainty of rigid external standards. The widespread appearance of legalistic moralism in a society can be interpreted as a sign that the *substance* of morality is yielding to the *form* of morality. In societies which still retain some moral traditions but are losing the substance of virtue, one can expect an insistence on the letter of the law rather than its originating spirit and purpose. Morality and other virtues become judged by adherence to formal principle. A democratic society exhibiting these traits of moralistic formalism has every reason to worry about its moral-political condition and especially its ability to act effectively in foreign affairs.

A political moralism which demands full adherence to every democratic principle regardless of circumstances, a position that we may call democratism, can defend itself against Machiavellian criticisms only by having recourse to arguments which are rejected out of hand by the Machiavellian as being utopian and as flying in the face of all political experience. There is between democratism and Machiavellianism a fundamental disagreement regarding the nature of man and politics. And one is on firm grounds questioning the perceptions of reality of a political-moral doctrine which does not even attempt to come to terms with the Machiavellian challenge but simply denies that it has any validity.

Modern legalistic moralism and hypermoralism have greatly exaggerated an older tendency. In the political thought of Plato one finds a reluctance to deal with the basic necessities of politics. In the *Republic*, Plato formulates the notion of an ideal

state. What should be noted in the present context is that Plato conceives of this standard of political right as existing outside of history, uninfected by what he sees as the shadowy world of change and decay. Although this ideal justice can never be realized within history, men must strain to the utmost to imitate it. Men are encouraged to look away from the historical world of the here and now, which is full of imperfection, to the ahistorical world of eternal perfection.

Already in Aristotle there begins a reaction against placing the Good too much beyond the concrete opportunities of life. Still, within the Western traditions of political thought a tendency to separate moral standards from the historical world of change has remained. For all of their strong emphasis on the need for morality in politics, the old Western traditions may also have inspired a certain detachment from and discomfort about the sometimes harsh and ignoble reality of politics, so obviously distant from the eternal Good. These traditions have induced a measure of reluctance to think about or participate in politics according to its own necessities, since that has seemed to require the compromising of moral principles, thus understood. It has appeared particularly difficult to reconcile politics with moral conduct in times of threat to the state. To the extent that the old moral traditions have created a sense that morality is not easily made compatible with the exigencies of politics, it has brought on the Machiavellian challenge and fueled the attempt to drive moral considerations from politics.

Machiavelli's "realism" can thus be seen as a reaction against an earlier failure to take full account of the nature of politics. It can be argued that the following statement by a modern defender of classical political thought exemplifies a lingering disinclination fully to confront the "unconventional" side of politics: "Let us leave these sad exigencies covered with the veil with which they are justly covered."¹⁵ A tendency to formulate moral standards apart from historical problems and to judge political actions according to this abstract model of perfection has a way of distracting attention from fundamental needs of politics and more generally from the concrete problems faced by statesmen. Machiavelli forces the political thinker to give systematic attention to types of political action which, although they may seem distant from morality, are nevertheless sometimes necessary to the order and survival of the state, a need which is not out of the ordinary but integral to the normal practice of statesmanship.

The answer to Machiavellianism, therefore, is not to reassert morality in abstract, ahistorical form. It is to argue that *genuine morality is concretely historical as well as transcendent of history*. Morality is not reluctant to face the sad exigencies of politics. Political morality, rightly understood, is itself the essence of realism. It effectively confronts any threat to its own continued existence in the world. A part of moral realism is rejection of the cynicism that infects Machiavellianism.

The argument being developed here is not that traditional moral speculation should be revised to rid one dimension of life, that of politics, of moral considerations. On the contrary, no shadow must fall on the ancient idea that politics should be subservient to morality. Contrary to impressions left by Machiavelli, moral conscience does not resign as man enters the political arena. What needs to be reexamined is the substantive *meaning* of morality in politics, and elsewhere, not the legitimacy of its influence. The philosophy of ethics must not treat the sad exigencies of politics as some sort of exceptions to normally mandatory rules. The dimension of politics on which Machiavelli concentrates his attention is a permanent one, one with which morality must be prepared to enter into intimate contact in order to advance the cause of good.

Morality must seek its purpose in an imperfect world. The statesman is morally obligated to advance that purpose even in the most unfavorable circumstances, which may involve threats to the very survival of political order. Morality (this is our thesis) is fully in harmony with the necessities of politics, that is, with those actions without which the civilized society cannot be safeguarded or promoted. More pre-

cisely, political morality is practical action which truly protects and advances the good society. In some favorable circumstances, political morality is indeed the avoidance of lying, deceit and violence. But in very different circumstances, for example, a situation involving the fundamental security needs of society, morality may well manifest itself as the sophisticated and elaborate practice of all three. The point is not that the end justifies the means and that evil means are permissible provided they are for a good end. A good end can be achieved only through good means. Our point is that lying, deceit, violence and other actions which are scorned by the conventional morality of the civilized society can be substantively moral, i.e., good, in some circumstances. Real political morality will inevitably clash with convention on occasion, and in the sophisticated civilized society, convention itself will contain some recognition of that necessity.

Morality always has the same quality and purpose. But this spirit of universal good must use different means as it tries to overcome different obstacles. If deceit and violence are sometimes necessary to the good end, they are not temporary deviations from morality for the sake of that end. They are themselves partial realizations of the moral good in an imperfect, obstinate world; they are the specific substance that morality must have in those particular circumstances to be true to its own nature. Its nature is in that sense concretely historical. By virtue of its unchanging purpose and equality, morality is at the same time transcendent of particular historical situations.¹⁶

Greek, Roman and Christian ethical thought is fully aware that morality is not defined by convention. Indeed, in the effort to demonstrate and defend the timeless, universal nature of morality, the classical and Judeo-Christian traditions have sometimes been prone to separate history and morality too sharply and attempted to formulate, quite specifically, what is always and everywhere right conduct. If the present argument is correct, ethical philosophy should resist the temptation to give specific rules or standards of action the status of eternal principles. What can be said ahead of all particular situations is that *moral political action must be such as to protect and enrich the life of civilization. The specific substance of good action is a morally inspired creation in unique circumstance, even when the action is guided by convention and long experience of similar situations.*

To legalistic moralism and hypermoralism a devastating military act against a hostile power may seem either a flagrant violation of moral norms or a sad but necessary exception to morality. According to the interpretation of morality here presented, dealing a crushing military blow with all of what it entails of death and suffering may in certain circumstances conceivably be an act of supreme moral responsibility, namely, if the action is calculated to minimize human suffering for the longer run and if it more generally does the most to advance the cause of civilization. Obviously, the determination, ahead of time, that such will be the case is an extremely difficult task for imperfect human beings falling far short of omniscience.

Needless to say, perfect morality is rarely to be expected in politics. In the international arena, as elsewhere, one usually finds no clear-cut confrontations between good and evil, all good on one side, all evil on the other. Yet choices have to be made by statesmen, and they must build upon the relatively most promising constellation of forces. All political situations, however discouraging, permit moral development. And, to reiterate, the moral potentialities inhering in the circumstances cannot be predefined, in specifics, apart from the historical situation of which they are a part.

Cynical thinkers and statemen will needlessly lower the level of politics and restrict the range of possible action by overlooking the higher opportunities of human existence. But at least they will be prepared for the worst. Utopian moralists, on the other hand, may inflict great suffering on their society or the world by exaggerating the possibilities of politics and by underestimating the obstacles to progress, thus exposing society to the neglected dangers. Morality requires a reasonably accurate as-

assessment of the nature of politics and life in general—its promises, dangers and limits. Real morality is impossible without a realistic grasp of the likely effects of possible lines of action.

To exemplify, we may imagine moral-political attitudes influenced by the notion that there exists in all men a fundamentally good nature which is just waiting to assert itself. This goodness is believed to be captive in the present world to fears and feelings of uncertainty. The objective must be to release the pent-up goodness of men. A political movement of this persuasion might entertain the idea that unilateral nuclear disarmament by the United States will help to dispel fear and cause the essential goodnaturedness of America's competitors to assert itself, effecting a similar policy of disarmament and relaxation of tensions. On these grounds, American disarmament would be regarded as moral, whereas calls for American military strength would seem immoral and "militaristic." What is in fact the case depends upon what can be realistically expected. If the *actual* effect of American disarmament would be an attempt by other powers to take advantage of apparent weakness, the call for disarmament is possibly highly immoral, for it would subject the world to pressures from political systems much less conducive to civilized life than is the United States. It is conceivable that in the existing circumstances the so-called militarists are the most effective in promoting the cause of civilization and that their actions are therefore moral.

Again, political morality does not exist in the abstract. It does not consist of "good intentions" based in an imaginary world of wishful thinking. Morality proves itself in a reasonably accurate reading of human motives and in corresponding measures which *actually* advance the cause of good by imaginatively and energetically dealing with the challenges and the resistance offered by the world. "Good intentions" lacking in realism are so far from moral as to be potentially diabolical in their consequences.

If there is any truth in the view that international politics poses the problem of ethics in its most acute form, no consideration of political morality is adequate which does not squarely and systematically confront the problems with which those entrusted with foreign policy are forced to deal. Moreover, one can dispute that there is any difference in kind between domestic and international politics. Politics of all types poses some threat to conventional norms. One does not have to be a cynic to grant that Machiavelli's portrayal of politics contains much truth about life in general. While *The Prince* is especially attuned to circumstances in which political anarchy prevails or threatens, it describes potentialities and patterns discernible in all politics. The Machiavellian perspective applies not just to exceptional or extraordinary situations, but sensitizes the observer to politics as it is sometimes practiced also in the most highly civilized states, even if behind an elaborate screen of conventional respectability. Although we are arguing here that morality ultimately transcends particular rules of conduct, *seeming* to act according to conventional standards may in some circumstances be a requirement of morality, namely, if acting unconventionally would seriously damage the civilized purposes of the particular society.

The typical moralistic critique of Machiavelli accuses him of distracting men from the high standards which define morality and of taking the measure of politics by its worst manifestations. Criticisms of that type set the stage for another round of realistic criticism of moralism. The only way of breaking out of this cycle of moralism and realism is to recognize that genuine political morality does not shy away from the sad exigencies of politics. It is not uncomfortable with doing what is necessary to safeguard civilization. In no way does it yield before forces of barbarism and destruction. The proposed understanding of morality, while it rejects any impression that politics can dispense with morality, also insists that political morality, like all other morality, is fully prepared to act effectively in existing circumstances. It can do so without compromising its own moral quality.

A political theory which is preoccupied with some abstract model of moral perfection does not well-prepare the individual for coping with political reality as it ordinarily exists. It rather predisposes the individual to feeling disdain for actual politics because of the latter's distance from the moral standard. Insofar as military armaments, intelligence activities, war-making or the like are accepted, they are likely to be viewed with discomfort, as last resorts, as temporary exceptions to moral principles, reluctantly made. In fact, it may be asked if a moralism which defines itself apart from historical circumstances and the concrete needs of statesmen is not a form of escapism using moralism as a facade. In any case, allegedly elevated moral norms that create uneasiness about the necessary task at hand or even unwillingness to face the real situation play into the hands of the ruthless who are prepared to take advantage of handwringing or squeamishness. Precisely because abstract disembodied notions of the good tend to render morality confused and ineffective in the face of concrete tasks, one must question their claim to be moral.

Encouraging man to think of moral virtue in terms of some abstract standard of perfection rather than in terms of the actual possibilities of politics tends to leave him without real guidance in the world of specific, day-to-day action. A person thus made insensitive to the concrete moral demands and opportunities of life is quite likely, especially if under acute personal pressure, to exhibit, *in practice*, traits of the ruthless Machiavellian.

Political morality proves its genuineness by always taking politics as it finds it and by trying to make the best of even the most unappealing concrete circumstances. The eminent practicality of all genuine morality in no way signifies a relaxation of its intrinsic standard of good. The demand of morality is always at its most intense. The maximum of moral goodness is required also in the most unfavorable situations. Only as those historical circumstances improve and the spirit of good gains adherents in the world can the loftiness of its ultimate purpose become more fully manifest in the life of politics.

Real morality, then, enters naturally into competition with opposing forces. As an integral part of our historical existence, it has the power to shape history. Having everywhere and forever the same purpose and quality, the spirit of morality is indeed timeless and transcendent of particular circumstances. As a force wishing to transform historical events in its own spirit, it also assumes concrete shape in acts demanded by the moment.

CONCLUSION

Insofar as political morality seeks expression through a democratic form of government, the principles of democracy, as vehicles for the aims of the good society, must be understood dynamically. Depending on historical circumstances, democracy must apply its principles rigidly or loosely, restrictively or generously. Nothing in morality stands in the way of a constitutional democracy protecting itself against foreign and domestic threats to its security. Protecting and promoting the values of civilization, let it be repeated, is the very essence of moral statecraft. Whether democracy will emphasize the need for strong military forces and a strong intelligence service or emphasize negotiation and cooperation with other states will depend on the historical situation. The variability of the means of morality, far from diluting or diminishing the spirit of good, demonstrates its natural home in the variable world of politics.

One formulates this non-legalistic and non-abstract notion of political morality in print with hesitation. The reason for the uneasiness is that men are not spontaneously inclined in the direction of morality to begin with. The argument presented here will undoubtedly be misused by cynical "realists" who are only too anxious to throw off restraints in any form. However, the danger to morality of questioning le-

galistic moralism and hypermoralism seems far smaller today than the danger from an abstract moralism which jeopardizes the very future of civilization. If morality now seems to be at an historical ebb in the Western world, it cannot be resuscitated through interpretations which are inimical to its essential nature.

NOTES

1. Luke 20:25.
2. For a very readable survey of the origins of American political culture reaching back to the beginnings of Western civilization, see Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974).
3. Rousseau develops his notion of popular sovereignty in *The Social Contract*. This treatise should be read together with Rousseau's two *Discourses* and the *Emile*. For a critical assessment of Rousseau's ethical and political ideas, see Claes G. Ryn, *Democracy and the Ethical Life* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), esp. Part III.
4. James Macgregor Burns, *The Deadlock of Democracy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963). Compare Rousseau's favorable view of plebiscitary majoritarian democracy to the very different assessment of Plato in Bk. VIII of the *Republic*. The sharp contrast is due to their almost antithetical views of the nature of man and society. What Socrates calls "democracy" corresponds, in our terminology, to plebiscitary democracy. Constitutional democracy is not considered by Plato but is potentially compatible with his understanding of human nature.
5. Hamilton, Madison, Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: New American Library, 1961), No. 10 (Madison), p. 82.
6. The classic definition of the role of a true representative is found in Edmund Burke, *Speech to Electors of Bristol* in *Collected Works* (Boston Edition), Vol. V, pp. 249-250; quoted in *Edmund Burke: Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed. Peter J. Stanlis (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Co., 1963), pp. 186-187.
7. The distinction between constitutional and plebiscitary democracy, and the contrast between the views of human nature and society that they imply, are developed at length in Ryn, *Democracy and the Ethical Life*. The book deals more generally with the ethical imperative in politics. See also John Hallowell, *The Moral Foundation of Democracy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954); Walter Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy* (New York: New American Library, 1955) esp. Ch. 7; and Peter Viereck, *The Unadjusted Man* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), esp. Ch. 15.
8. Lippmann, *Public Philosophy*, p. 12.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 29.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
11. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, with an introduction by Max Lerner (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 65.
12. For a very useful and thorough review of the extraordinarily diverse interpretations of Machiavelli, see "The Originality of Machiavelli" in Isaiah Berlin, *Against the Current* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).
13. For a critique of the blurring of politics and religion, see Claes G. Ryn, "The Things of Caesar," *Thought*, Vol. 55, No. 219 (December, 1980). See also René de Visme Williamson, "The Institutional Church and Political Activity," *Modern Age*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (Spring, 1974).
14. Plato, *The Republic*, 2nd ed., rev. (Harmondsworth; Penguin Books, 1974), p. 221 (443e).
15. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 160. Strauss' position is not unambiguous, and he is not one to question the need for "unconventional" action in politics. On the moral ambiguities in Strauss, see Claes G. Ryn, "History and the Moral Order," in Francis J. Caravan, ed., *The Ethical Dimension of Political Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1983).
16. Morality as simultaneously historical and transcendent is discussed more fully in Claes G. Ryn, "History and the Moral Order."

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Lessons Learned

In his essay on classical regime analysis, Richard Sears argues that classical political philosophy and history have much to teach contemporary students of international affairs. To the extent that contemporary students of politics address the thought of Aristotle's *Politics* and Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars*, it is usually to buttress contemporary arguments and attitudes about the international system. Aristotle is often portrayed as an "idealist" who underestimated the role that force plays in a world without a central governing authority. Thucydides' "Melian Dialogue" is often portrayed as the first and definitive formulation that power is the primary element and determining factor in the conduct of international life. In a careful analysis of both the *Politics* and the *Peloponnesian Wars*, Sears argues that Thucydides' and Aristotle's positions are actually complementary, not contradictory. Sears shows that while Aristotle tends to concentrate on the phenomenon of regimes and how regimes shape both domestic and international life, he is fully aware that brute force or power is an inevitable element in foreign affairs in a world characterized by independent political entities. Thucydides is shown to emphasize not only the fact that superior power can be determinative in international conflict but that the character of a given political community and its political leadership can shape international politics as well. The domestic constitutional arrangements in Athens and Sparta are revealed to influence profoundly the way each polity ultimately sees and acts in the international system. Sears posits that classical thinkers like Aristotle and Thucydides understood the importance of economic and systemic factors in international life, without ignoring the unique character of every regime. Sears suggests that classical regime analysis has a more comprehensive discussion of the role that both internal (unit) and external (systemic) factors play in the shaping of world politics.

Claes Ryn's essay, too, explicitly recognizes the importance of regime analysis for an adequate understanding of the workings of the international system. Ryn particularly emphasizes the slowness and tendency of public opinion in pluralist democratic societies to ignore the fact that international politics is characterized by a certain harshness and that vigilance and defensive preparations are necessary if a stable balance of power is to be maintained. Ryn, following Walter Lippman, praises Western constitutionalism for placing power not in the hands of the people but in statesmen who, while owing ultimate responsibility to the citizenry, are free to deliberate and make sound choices in a dangerous, anarchical (international) world. Ryn also warns constitutional regimes that the morality of the international system is and must be different from the morality of personal and domestic life. Otherwise, good regimes, by upholding an impossible abstract morality, may allow aggressive, tyrannical regimes to triumph. Ryn advocates a morality in foreign policy that takes adequate account of the consequences as well as the means of a given action.

Raymond Aron's essay provides an example of modern regime analysis. Aron does not deny that international politics is characterized by anarchy or that states pursue, through the use of power, their national interests. Yet the character of a regime—its law, its constitutional forms and its political principles—shapes, as much as mere survival does, the way each political community views its national interest. Aron argues that true realism takes into account the fact that different regimes hold very differing notions of national interests. An empire animated by a

secular religion (an ideology), like the Soviet Union, cannot be compared to an empire that is merely interested in, let us say, the readjustment of national boundaries. True realism must distinguish between essentially status-quo states and essentially revolutionary regimes. Theories of international relations must recognize not only what states have in common (i.e., the use of force for the defense of sovereignty in an anarchic world) but also how states differ (according to the fundamental principles that guide and limit their involvement in world politics.)

Aron and Ryn provide contemporary restatements of the classical, comprehensive view about power and principles in international relations. Many dominant approaches to international theory, some mentioned by Sears, tend to see power as the fundamental "fact" motivating all states' foreign policy or assert that states tend to act similarly in similar situations, that is, when faced by the same external stimuli. The authors in this section all assert the desirability of a new realism in international relations that understands the vital role played by anarchy in international political life but does not ignore the role domestic structures and national principles play in nations' international conduct. Regime analysis does not contradict balance-of-power analysis but, rather, attempts to place such analysis in a more comprehensive framework.

CHAPTER 3

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways is Thucydides' discussion of power and its role in international relations similar to that of modern realist theorists? How does it differ? Does the realist/idealist dichotomy apply to either Aristotle or Thucydides?
2. What are some of the difficulties with the concept of "national interest" as discussed by Raymond Aron? Can "national interest" be adequately defined apart from a regime's principles and values? Is the "national interest" limited to mere survival?
3. What are some of the difficulties that Ryn and Walter Lippmann suggest democracies face in conducting effective foreign policies? What role does public opinion play in fostering or inhibiting an effective foreign policy in democratic regimes?
4. Drawing on Richard Sears' essay, what do Aristotle and Thucydides mean by "regime"? Does the character of regimes *wholly* determine foreign policy according to the classical analyst?
5. Distinguish Aron's "true realism" from Morgenthau's and Hobbes' realism discussed in Sears' essay.

Bibliographic Notes

The earliest and, in many ways, unsurpassed example of regime analysis can be found in books four and five of Aristotle's *Politics* (Ernest Barker, translator, Oxford, 1981).

Contemporary theorists downplay regime analysis as an element in international politics. The best argument against regime analysis in international politics is probably Kenneth Waltz's *Man, the State and War* (Columbia University Press, 1959). Waltz argues for a "systemic" perspective, which abstracts from the characteristics of national units and analyzes international politics in light of the fact of international anarchy.

Raymond Aron accepts the fundamental "fact" of systemic anarchy in *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, (Doubleday, 1966) but emphasizes the real importance of state characteristics and regime differences in shaping international politics. Cf. Part Two, Chapter X of his work on the "Nations and Regimes" in *Peace and War*, pp. 279-305.

Immanuel Kant argues for the inherent peacefulness of liberal commercial societies in *Perpetual Peace* (Bobbs Merrill, 1957). Kant's argument is reflected throughout the thought of classical nineteenth-century liberalism. V.I. Lenin attributes international conflict to capitalist regimes in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (International Publishers, 1929).

Hannah Arendt argues for the uniqueness of twentieth-century totalitarian regimes as well as their intricate relationship with imperialism in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1966).

In *Détente: Prospects for Democracy and Dictatorship* (Transaction, 1980), Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn analyzes what he believes to be the aggressive nature of Communist totalitarianism and laments the absence of civic courage in liberal commercial societies. A similar passivity in liberal society is noted by Joseph Schumpeter in *Imperialism and Social Classes* (Meridian, 1960).

Henry Kissinger argues in *American Foreign Policy* (Norton, 1977) that the American regime's foreign policy is affected by the constraints of a "domestic structure."

The role that different cultures play in international politics is effectively analyzed by Adda Bozeman in *Politics and Culture in International History* (Princeton University Press, 1960).

An argument over the role of "ideology" in revolutionary France's imperialism can be found in the divergent positions of Charles James Fox, Edmund Burke and William Pitt in Parliamentary debate in the English House of Commons, 1712-1800. Useful excerpts can be found in Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, editors, *Principles and Problems in International Politics* (Knopf, 1950). A similar debate over the role of Leninist ideology can be found in the disputes of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and his critics over the role of ideology and regime characteristics in contemporary Soviet imperialism in *Foreign Affairs* (Fall, 1980).