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A STUDY OF FIVE MODERN HISTORIANS:  
HOFSTADTER, ELKINS, MCKITRICK, MEYERS, BENSON

by

KONNILYN GAY FEIG

B.S. Montana State University, 1958

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

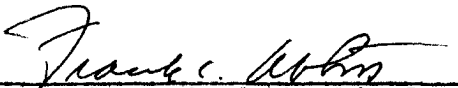
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The phrase, "no man is an island unto himself" is particularly applicable in this instance. The research, the organization, the writing and the conclusions of this thesis are entirely my own as are most of the ideas. But the project would never have been started, much less finished had I been an "island unto myself." Four perceptive and understanding individuals far beyond any call of duty influenced and supported me in such a manner as to render as accomplished fact what seemed to me an impossible task. It is a distinct pleasure to be able to express my gratitude here.

I am especially indebted to Dr. Maurine Clow, Associate Dean of Students at Montana State University. It was only under her stimulating guidance, in response to her constant challenges, and in reaction to her periodical proddings coupled with warm sensitivity and support over a five-year period, that a beginning was made and that the beginning attempt did not "die on the vine." Dorothy Strawn, Dean of Women at the University of Washington, took over at a time when fatigue itself under any other circumstances would have ended the endeavor. It is with great appreciation that I recall her making every effort to arrange the circumstances, to encourage and understand so that even though working, I experienced unusual freedom and latitude in pursuing my degree.

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understanding of my every discouragement and feeling as I trudged along "the last mile." Her contributions are unassessable but I have good reason to believe that at several crucial junctures, the absence of her optimism, of her intellectual questioning, and her deep insight, not only as an employer but as a scholar and a friend, would have meant the abandonment of the project.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Morton Borden, Chairman of the History Department at Montana State University--a crusty, sharply challenging, brilliantly perceptive New Yorker whose surprising patience, insight and support made the whole effort much more that of intellectual excitement and pleasure than of laborious drudgery.

Kornie Feig

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION, THE PROBLEM AND EXPLANATION OF AUTHORS USED

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Publications today abound with reference to "new breakthroughs" in various academic and intellectual fields. One even finds such reference in the field of history. However, the "new breakthroughs" in history, when analyzed can usually be tossed aside with favorable or unfavorable comment as to the slightly different slant thrown on an historical problem by use of the customary, long standing methods and approaches of traditional historical research. The pros and cons of every conceivable question in American history are rehashed over and over again and the questions are then assumed to be settled until next month when others, eagerly desiring to make a "real contribution" or to "end it once and for all," reopen these questions, arguments, and problems for another round. But significantly, the field of American history is devoid of any real "breakthroughs" during the past few decades. Few changes in basic technique or method are in evidence today as compared with historical scholarship of say, twenty years ago. Although science has added another dimension--space--and although it seems on the verge of conquering this new dimension, surprisingly it appears much easier to deal with the to-be-experienced future than with the already-lived past.

## B. THE PROBLEM

The problem of this thesis is to examine the writings of five historians, all well-known to each other, who themselves feel they have achieved "new breakthroughs" or have at least opened the way for these breakthroughs in their particular areas of American history by the use of what may be termed "daring new approaches." It will be the task of this author to discover and understand what their claims are, if these claims are true and if true to discern by what means they have been reached. It will also be necessary and of value to ascertain the significance of these "new views" and their acceptance by American historical scholars in general and then to project into the future, the meaning for future historical research. Whole new areas, once thought dry for further research, might be discovered fertile again under the influence of these interdisciplinary historians. Whatever the end result, it is the hope of this author that something of value might be added to the growing interest in, and knowledge and interpretation of, interdisciplinary techniques, approach and basic philosophy.

The scope and breadth of this problem appears far greater than the author intended when the project was begun. However, the discovery was made that in order to do this task justice, the study of the works and ideas of one historian was not adequate; that rather, this study necessitated an analysis of the writings of several historians who showed, in some manner, a philosophy or concept in common, who had banded together in some way, allusive as the band might be, though differing widely in point of view and agreement on specific issued and in discipline familiarity and

background. In order to make a comparative, comprehensive objective judgment possible it was felt that this was the only really valid manner in which to attempt an academic examination of this vague question. Therefore, upon the suggestion of Dr. Morton Borden of the Montana State University history department, the research base was widened to include the names of five historians--Richard Hofstadter, Lee Benson, Stanley Elkins, Marvin Meyers and Eric McKittrick. This does not mean that no other historians could with logic be included in the list. It only means the five seemed to be a broader yet manageable number with which to work and, as will be discussed later, these five historians appeared to fit together in some manner.

This author compiled a bibliography of every book, article and review written by each of these five historians on any subject since 1940. The year 1940 was arbitrarily but with validity chosen as a starting point. Since these are comparatively young men, twenty-two years seemed a long enough time in which to examine their thinking, methods, ideas. More specifically, however, the oldest of the five, Richard Hofstadter, did not begin writing for publication purposes until that year. In fact, he did not receive his Ph.D. until 1942. Each book, article, and review was read and reread thoroughly. Some were then discarded as immaterial to this study or as repetitious. Those which clearly showed the historians' thinking and approaches were retained.

Since these men work from a basic knowledge of the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy and literary criticism, the next step was for the author to become intimately acquainted with at

least the basic tools of these disciplines in such a manner as to make it possible to work easily in these areas and to move in and out of them with relative freedom. Also necessary, of course, was a familiarization with the now accepted standard interpretations of every field and problem in American history dealt with by these men. The bibliography includes some of the background material read in order to achieve a familiarization of this type.

The next task then became an attempt to present in as objective a fashion as possible the works of these men in such a manner as to throw light primarily upon six factors: The differences from standard, now-accepted works; the similarities with these new works; the conclusions reached; the philosophies of these historians basic to their work; the unifying thread running through all the writing; and, possibly most important, the methods used. It was equally important that this material be presented in such a fashion that any historian reading the summarized versions would have adequate data to make his own judgment or evaluation regardless of that reached by this author. Therefore, although the form of presentation may at first appear similar to that of elementary book reports, the intent, and hopefully the outcome, is far from that.

In this first stage several questions needed to be posed: What are these five historians trying to do? How do they do it? Do they succeed? However, it soon became evident that a study in this area stopping at this point would be valueless. Therefore, added to the already growing bibliography was a list of every known review or comment written by any scholar in any academic discipline on any of the publications of these five

historians. How was a list of this type secured? This research was done at the University of Washington and thus the author had the opportunity to use the excellent resources of the University of Washington Library system with its very complete periodical division. The Book Review Digest from 1944 to 1962 provided a portion of the list but the Digest is never complete, and therefore, the author went through every volume of every periodical printed in the liberal arts or social science field from 1944 and available at the University of Washington libraries.

Each review was then carefully analyzed with careful attention to the reviewer, his interpretation, his reaction, his conception of what was being attempted, his expectation of future value and importance. Any material of value in these areas was noted and then classified and coordinated.

Added to this list of reviews as additional pertinent matter, were items of information from other authors in other areas. In addition, an examination of current, popular works in these other disciplines was made, and reference to the five men noted. The point here, of course, was to include not only an analysis of how these five historians were using the tools of other disciplines but also to determine if a reciprocal exchange was indicated. Finally, a textbook by Hofstadter was studied.

At this point then, the basic questions posed in the beginning had to be broadened and expanded in the following manner.

What are these men trying to do?

What do they say and show they are attempting?

What do their critics say they are trying to do?

How does this author interpret their attempts?

How do they do it?

What methods do they say and show they are using?

What methods do their critics find they are using?

Do they succeed?

What traditional historical viewpoints are challenged?

Are they accepted by other historians?

If not--why?

If so--are the interpretations of these other historians correct in this author's view?

Are they understood by other historians?

Have they opened up a new productive area of research in the field of American history?

If not--why?

If so--what does the future have in store for historical research?

In brief then, the design of this thesis is as explained above.

C. EXPLANATION OF AUTHORS USED

A brief survey of the background of this arbitrarily selected circle of historical scholars is imperative if an understanding of their influence on one another and if their participation in a "mutual admiration society" is to be attained.

Dr. Richard Hofstadter, the most widely known historian of the five studied, is at present the De Witt Clinton Professor of American History at Columbia University where he has served on the faculty since 1946. Still a relatively young man (46 years old in 1962), he received his B.A. in History from the University of Buffalo, his M.A. in History in 1938 and his Ph.D. in History in 1942 from Columbia University. He held the William Bayard Cutting Traveling Fellowship at Columbia, 1941-42. Upon receiving his Ph.D. he joined the University of Maryland history faculty and remained there until 1946 when he became a member of the history faculty at Columbia. In 1955, he gave the Commonwealth Fund Lectures at University College, London, and during the academic year, 1958-59, he held the Pitt Professorship at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hofstadter is the only one of the five who is a member of the American Studies Association; he has served as a television research authority on the Constitution; he participated in the Salzburg Seminar Program in the summer of 1950. He has been Associate Editor of the Political Science Quarterly and is now serving on the editorial boards of the American Quarterly and the American Scholar. He is listed in the

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. xvi.

International Who's Who and in Current Biography.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hofstadter, Phi Beta Kappa, is active in the American Civil Liberties Union. He has been the recipient of several fellowships and awards including fellowships under the Commission on Financing Higher Education, the American Academic Freedom Project, the William Bayard Cutting Traveling Fund at Columbia, the Albert J. Beveridge Memorial Fund of the American Historical Association, the Alfred A. Knopf Foundation, and the Behavioral Sciences Division of the Ford Foundation. Richard Hofstadter is perhaps most widely known as the 1956 recipient of the Pulitzer Prize in History for his book, The Age of Reform.

Dr. Eric McKittrick served as Assistant Professor of History at the University of Chicago prior to accepting his present position in 1960 as Professor of History at Rutgers University. During the academic year, 1951-52, he was "a graduate student in American History at Columbia University and a member of Richard Hofstadter's seminar."<sup>3</sup> He received his Ph. D. from Columbia. Mr. McKittrick's only book published to date, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, was written under a grant from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations and won the 1960 American Historical Association John H. Dunning Prize.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Marvin Meyers, a relatively young historian like the other four (now 41 years old), received his M. A. and Ph. D. in History from Columbia

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<sup>2</sup>Current Biography, 1956, p. 281.

<sup>3</sup>Eric L. McKittrick, "Edgar Saltus of the Obsolete," American Quarterly, III (1957), 22.

<sup>4</sup>Eric L. McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 523.



University. Since 1948, he has been on the history faculty of the University of Chicago and is now Professor of History and Social Sciences. During the academic year 1952-53, he was on leave as a lecturer at the University of Puerto Rico and spent 1955-56 as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. In 1959, he won the Quantrell Undergraduate Teaching Prize given at the University of Chicago. His only published book, The Jacksonian Persuasion, written with the assistance of a grant from the Ford Foundation, won the American Historical Association John H. Dunning Prize in 1958.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Lee Benson, presently Research Associate, Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, received his M.A. in history in 1948 from Columbia and his Ph.D. in history in 1952 from Cornell University. He joined the Bureau of Applied Social Research in 1956 where he has engaged in the study of interdisciplinary techniques and methods as applied particularly in the area of American history. During the 1958-59 academic year, he was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Mr. Benson has published several books, and much of his research has been made possible by assistance from the Bureau and the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Stanley Elkins joined the faculty of Smith College in 1960 where he is now serving as Assistant Professor of History. Previous to this,

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<sup>5</sup>Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion, Politics and Belief (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. vii.

<sup>6</sup>Lee Benson, Turner and Beard, American Historical Writing Reconsidered (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960), p. ix.

he was Assistant Professor of Social Sciences, University of Chicago. He received his Ph.D. in history at Columbia. Mr Elkin's only publication, Slavery, was written with the aid of a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship.<sup>7</sup>

Each of these five men received at least one advanced degree from Columbia University. Richard Hofstadter, although a relatively young man, is the oldest and best-known. The other four are approximately the same age and studied at Columbia at approximately the same time, and all four probably studied under or at least knew of Richard Hofstadter while they were obtaining their graduate degrees in American history. Both Benson and Hofstadter are now at Columbia, and Meyers, McKitrick and Elkins have served together on the social sciences faculty of the University of Chicago. McKitrick says he studied under Hofstadter and it could be assumed that the other four did also.<sup>8</sup> But assumptions of this nature used as final evidence have no place in a thesis. As will be demonstrated to a greater extent later, McKitrick and Elkins have collaborated extensively on the writing of several papers on American history. By checking the acknowledgments and footnotes, it was found that all five men influenced and collaborated with each other in different areas.

Stanley Elkins in Slavery finds himself "especially obliged to Richard Hofstadter and C. Vann Woodward" and ". . . deeply grateful to

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<sup>7</sup>Stanley M. Elkins, Slavery, A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life (Chicago: University Press, 1959), p. 239.

<sup>8</sup>McKitrick, American Quarterly, p. 22.

Eric McKittrick."<sup>9</sup> He acknowledges help from Marvin Meyers.<sup>10</sup> Richard Hofstadter is quoted six times in the main body of the book.<sup>11</sup>

Marvin Meyers in The Jacksonian Persuasion acknowledges Hofstadter's "discerning critique,"<sup>12</sup> quotes him three times (each with applause),<sup>13</sup> lists The Age of Reform, The American Political Tradition and "William Leggett, Spokesman of Jacksonian Democracy," in his bibliography.<sup>14</sup>

Eric McKittrick in writing Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction finds "a particular debt is owing to Richard Hofstadter and C. Vann Woodward."<sup>15</sup> Also, "The special role of Stanley Elkins . . . partook of the conspiratorial."<sup>16</sup>

The aid of Richard Hofstadter is acknowledged in Lee Benson's Concept of Jacksonian Democracy.<sup>17</sup> He refers to Marvin Meyers critically in two instances,<sup>18</sup> but quotes him in a positive fashion in four other places.<sup>19</sup> In references to Richard Hofstadter, he says, "I have also benefited considerably . . . ." from one Hofstadter's articles.<sup>20</sup> In this book also, Benson spends some time discussing and using what he terms the "Hofstadter-Hartz thesis."<sup>21</sup> In Turner and Beard, Hofstadter's

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<sup>9</sup>Elkins, loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.    <sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 18, 32, 141, 164, 181, 214-15.

<sup>12</sup>Meyers, op. cit., p. xii.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 6, 185, 191.    <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>15</sup>McKittrick, Andrew Johnson, p. 523.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Lee Benson, The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy, New York as a Test Case (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. vi.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. pp. 6, 336.    <sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 24, 57, 140, 330.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 114.    <sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 273-74.

"Charles Beard and The Constitution" is quoted in two instances.<sup>22</sup>

Richard Hofstadter acknowledges the aid of these men in The Age of Reform. Stanley Elkins' name appears in the list of acknowledgements.<sup>23</sup> In addition he states, "Lee Benson . . .gave me much needed advice on Populism and the history of American agriculture, and gave me cause to hope that some specialists in this field might be more indulgent than I at first had any reason to expect . . . . The research assistants who successively served this inquiry, Paul Carter, Gurston Goldin, Eric McKittrick, [italics mine] and James Shenton, gave it an informed, imaginative, and affectionate attention that went beyond the call of their assignments. I am indebted in particular to conversations with Mr. McKittrick for some of the formulation in Chapter V . . . ."<sup>24</sup> Richard Hofstadter quotes in the body of the book from Elkins and McKittrick's "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier Thesis, Part I: Democracy in the Old Northwest"<sup>25</sup> and from Lee Benson's Turner and Beard<sup>26</sup> and Merchants, Farmers, and Railroads.<sup>27</sup>

These five men are very much aware of each other; four of them feel in debt to some degree to Richard Hofstadter; Richard Hofstadter has received help and aid from the other four; they have all collaborated at some point; there is a basic tie of some type between them as evidenced in some, if not many, instances. For the purposes of this thesis, the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 96, 103.

<sup>23</sup> Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 329. <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-52.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 99, 164.

assumption then is made that the previous material presented plus the results obtained by content analysis in the following pages gives enough reason to consider, with validity, the writings and thus the ideas of these five men together, and to approach them in the light of some common ground in the field of American history.

Chapters II, III, IV, V, and VI will deal, author by author, publication by publication with the bulk of the writings of Hofstadter, Elkins, McKittrick, Meyers and Benson. Certain of their publications, for the sake of brevity, have been excluded. What remains was considered essential to a full overall understanding, or at least to the building of a basis from which such an understanding could be attempted.

## CHAPTER II

### RICHARD HOFSTADTER

Because Richard Hofstadter has been extremely prolific, an abundance of material exists which, if analyzed, indicates his thinking, his methodology and his conclusions on a variety of subjects in American history. However he embarks on no single crusade, uses no single method, writes on no particular grouping of subjects. Therefore, all of his pertinent publications will have to be examined one by one, beginning with his books and followed by his articles. Richard Hofstadter emerges from his works as a psychological historian, as a man concerned with the history of ideas, as one who not only records and reports men's actions but who moves behind the scenes to examine, question, and interpret the motives and thoughts in the background of these actions.

#### A. BOOK ONE

The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States contains two essays, the first by Richard Hofstadter, the second by C. DeWitt Hardy.<sup>1</sup> The concern here is only with the essay, "The Development of Higher Education in America," written by Mr. Hofstadter.<sup>2</sup>

The entire book was published for the Commission on Financing Higher Education in 1952 under the sponsorship of the Association of American

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<sup>1</sup>C. DeWitt Hardy and Richard Hofstadter, The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-134.

Universities. John D. Millett, Executive Director of the Commission, clearly states in the forward, the reasoning that led to the underwriting of this type of publication. One of the major causes of lack of funds for colleges and universities is laid at the door of ignorance--ignorance of the purpose, the background, the social setting, the importance and the development of higher education--ignorance by the general public, by benefactors and taxpayers, and by students and professors. This is important because "if thoughtful citizens are to be concerned about the financial well-being of higher education, they must believe in its goals and methods" and they must understand it.<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter was asked to prepare an essay "which would endeavor to relate some of the broad developments of higher education to the background of which they were a part," to determine what "it has meant to American society and what American society has done for it."<sup>4</sup> This last statement is perhaps the best description of this essay. Defining higher education in America to the close of the Civil War as the "Age of the College," Mr. Hofstadter moves immediately to an examination of the early curriculum of the colleges and discusses the general significance of a college curriculum.<sup>5</sup>

It reveals the educated community's conception of what knowledge is most worth transmitting to the cream of its youth, and it reveals what kind of mind and character an education is expected to produce. The curriculum is a barometer by which we may measure the cultural pressures that operate upon the school.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. viii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

He cites three underlying assumptions behind the classical American college curriculum: the idea that "education was for gentlemen;"<sup>7</sup> "knowledge was thought of as a certain more or less fixed quantum of truth, and the primary function of education was to get as much as possible of this corpus of Christian truth into the heads of the undergraduates;"<sup>8</sup> and "the object of education was to exercise a form of mental discipline which would train the faculties for their use."<sup>9</sup> Mr. Hofstadter makes a brief indictment as to the great inadequacy of this type of education, showing that its lack of utilitarianism left it rather purposeless in the face of the moving, demanding society in which it found itself. However, the "old-time colleges were not organically knit into the fabric of economic life" for at this point in American history, the success story of a person was not affected by the factor of a college education.<sup>10</sup> The intimate relationship between college and career, as is the experience today, developed gradually.

The next phase of development, the "university revolution," is treated in some detail. According to Hofstadter, the tremendous growth and expansion of American universities was precipitated by three factors-- "the immensely rapid growth of American industry, the settlement of the continent and the emergence of great fortunes."<sup>11</sup> Instead of colleges concentrating on the preservation of knowledge, industry was demanding research to expand this knowledge. Endowments to universities increased

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.      <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 13.      <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 21.      <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 31.



in leaps and bounds and the nature of these endowments changed with the largest amounts coming from businessmen and industrialists. This meant a shift in the complexion of the boards of trustees. Men interested in a more utilitarian approach to education took their places on these governing bodies. College presidencies were being given to secular and scientific men instead of clergymen. Darwinism entered the hallowed halls, and with this movement of thought came Huxley, Fisk, Adams as lecturers, and beer and wine as added dinner attractions!

"The practical, technical, and scientific emphases of the new higher education were facilitated by two related developments after the Civil War--the emergence of the state universities and the creation of land-grant colleges."<sup>12</sup> In treating the subject of the development of land-grant colleges, it is emphasized that they were not the result of any grass-roots movement, that the small farmers eyed them with suspicion and that the Morrill Act was passed in spite of the opposition of states-rights men and only after the South had seceded from the Union. Until 1900, 'the predominate effect of this Act was to produce a number of struggling institutions of moderate size and varying caliber.'<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter traces the beginnings and development of the elective system, its advantages and disadvantages and emphasizes the growth of vocationalism or utilitarianism or the use of a college education as primarily a means of entering a career. As pointed out before, the general curriculum reflects the thinking, the values, and the educational objectives of the society at large and this change in type of curriculum

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 38.    <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

was another indication of the movement, the specialization, the growth, the demands of the American society and economy. The old classical curriculum did not meet the needs of the rapidly growing industrial society, and the elective system, seemingly more democratic, took hold rapidly. Of course, the results were not always the same and Hofstadter does suggest a swing of the pendulum from one extreme to the other with all the attending "evils" of any extreme. While the positive advantages are considered obvious, the negative aspects were present also--"excessive vocationalism, a lowering of standards, . . . loss of seriousness."<sup>14</sup> Utility became a major consideration and knowledge for the sake of knowledge fell by the wayside.

In tracing the growth and development of the professional schools, two principles are very much in evidence again--the first, that the schools and curriculum reflected the needs and demands of the community. This community at large, "in the period of industrialism, corporate business, urbanism, growing social complexity, and the advancement and heightening prestige of science," urgently demanded specialized skills. The attempt to be scientific in turn led to "excessive scientism" which "has become one of the banes of modern American culture."<sup>15</sup> The second principle in question concerns itself with the pendulum movement, from one extreme to another--from little training, lack of professionalism to narrowness of scope and overspecialization.

Mr. Hofstadter examines the condition of the professional schools today (1952). Criticism of law schools centers around the "political

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

and moral failure of legal education."<sup>16</sup> The social responsibilities of the lawyer, his policy-making function, and the relation of legal structures and doctrines to the major problems of society have been neglected.

Concerning medicine, the following statement is made:

A race of socially and culturally myopic physicians has been reared up, at the very period in history when the medical profession seems to need more than ever a heightened intellectual and cultural awareness. . . . The conviction has grown that pre-medical education must be liberal enough to supply what the professional phase of education cannot.<sup>17</sup>

In touching on this whole problem of professionalism, Mr. Hofstadter feels "there is hardly an area in which some awareness of the limitations of professionalized general ignorance and trained intellectual incapacity has not been shown."<sup>18</sup> Among several important questions raised in this area, two stand out for further thought. "How many professions belong to the sphere of higher education? Is a profession any discipline which trains its practitioners by a formal process of education after high school?"<sup>19</sup>

Keeping in mind that this book was written for the express purpose of acquainting the general public with the nature of higher education so that this public will awaken to the immediate monetary needs of academic institutions, emphasis is placed on "intellectual freedom and generous material support" as the "two essential needs of the modern college and university."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 86-87.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

Neither will be granted in sufficient measure in any community that does not have an enlightened appreciation of the work of higher education, and no appreciation is enlightened enough unless it is commonly understood that the best reason for supporting the college and the university lies not in the services they can perform, vital though such services may be, but in the values they represent. The ultimate criterion of the place of higher learning in America will be the extent to which it is esteemed not as a necessary instrument of external ends, but as an end in itself.<sup>21</sup>

On the positive side, American higher education is credited with an "admirable record."<sup>22</sup> But a particular hypothesis stands out--that American higher education reflects American society and its wishes at the moment and therefore has many deficiencies. Mr. Hofstadter goes after these deficiencies with vigor, standing in criticism of a system of which he is a member with the idea that "any program for improvement must be founded upon earnest probing for faults."<sup>23</sup> In criticizing he dwells upon several factors:

1. The utilitarian concept of American higher education--the idea that education is justified as a means to an end rather than an end in itself; the emphasis upon the uses rather than the content of education.
2. The diversity of types of educational services--the development of mass education attaching to the word "democracy" the meaning of education for all, not for all able.
3. What he and David Riesman refer to as "cult of youth"--with its attending emphasis upon the extracurricular and athletics.
4. The trivial and practical nature of much of its work.
5. The pluralistic structure and corresponding fragmentation and centers of mediocrity.
6. The lack of not only money but status and prestige among academicians--the absence of an "intellectual class."

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 133-34.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

7. The control of American higher education by outsiders, not a late development but traceable to the beginning of this system--with all the attending disadvantages and inherent dangers.

No analysis of this book would be complete nor would it tell the "whole story," nor would it give a true indication of the author's method of style without a few choice, direct quotes on education today:

Education is justified apologetically as a useful instrument in attaining other ends . . . . Rarely, however, does anyone presume to say that it is good for man.<sup>24</sup>

American higher education has done everything from providing a marriage market for nubile females to producing the atomic bomb. . . . There is much talk of democracy in American higher education, but democracy in education can be synonymous with either mediocrity or ability; . . . State universities are commonly required to admit all graduates of state high schools who have academic records that can be examined without shuddering, with the consequence that an unholy proportion of the freshman classes in these institutions consists of sheer excess baggage.<sup>25</sup>

The prominence of athletics in American colleges is no accident; it is a primary symptom, a logical outgrowth of the cult of youth, the prevalence of anti-intellectualism, and the schools' need for public attention and private funds.<sup>26</sup>

In evaluating what Mr. Hofstadter has said and done in this essay, several ideas stand out. In the first place, this is not a detailed historical survey, this is not a history of higher education. It represents rather an attempt to put the development of higher education in its proper setting, to relate its growth to its cultural, social and economic surroundings and to explain its development in those terms. The author emphasizes the utilitarian aspect, the pendulum swing, secularism. However, he, himself, has a utilitarian motive in writing this essay. He argues against utilitarianism, against over-specialization. He is very concerned

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

about secularism and often points to the influence of industry and business, leaving the impression that what business and industry need, colleges give. He argues against the lack of social responsibility, against excessive lay control of colleges.

B. BOOK TWO

The occasion for the writing of Academic Freedom in the Age of the College<sup>1</sup> by Richard Hofstadter and its companion, Academic Freedom in the Age of the University by Walter Metzger, was the celebration in 1954 of Columbia University's Bicentennial which had as its theme, "Man's Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof."

These publications were made possible with the assistance of the Louis Rabinowitz Foundation. With the hope that "an enlargement of understanding will in the end be an enlargement of freedom," Hofstadter and Metzger undertook the task of writing an account of the problem of academic freedom in American colleges and universities from the founding of the first college to the recent past.<sup>2</sup> These authors avoided treating the story of academic freedom as if it were mainly the story of academic repressions. The books undertook to describe the changing attitude of scholars themselves and of the larger community toward the academic enterprise itself so that it might become known "what freedom has meant to successive generations of academic men, to what extent they have achieved it and what factors in academic life itself, as well as in American culture at large, have created and sustained it."<sup>3</sup> These authors felt that the usual method of studying academic freedom--the case

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hofstadter, Academic Freedom in the Age of the College (New York: Columbia University Press, Columbia Paperback Edition, 1961).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. v.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

study method--is narrow in scope. By concentrating upon cases of outstanding violations of freedom, the issue becomes distorted. Therefore, Mr. Hofstadter and Mr. Metzger have placed academic freedom in the social setting of the time, have examined the problem from theological, economic and philosophical vantages. Mr. Hofstadter's book, which is volume one, deals with the "prehistory of academic freedom in America," and he intends to study the positive and negative contributions of this era.<sup>4</sup>

As in Development and Scope of Higher Education, Mr. Hofstadter intends to show that the educational institutions and philosophies reflect the setting and time of which they are a part. Rather than take the initiative in many of the developments, "[the schools] followed closely but at a safe distance."<sup>5</sup> He applies this thesis just as surely to academic freedom as he did to curriculum in his first book on education, treating the problem of academic freedom without exception in terms of the prevailing social setting. He illustrates that there has always been a demand by pursuers of the truth for freedom to inquire, even to challenge prevailing beliefs and attitudes. But the form and content of this early agitation for "academic freedom" bears little resemblance to that of the 20th century. Academic freedom did not mean the same thing to men of the Middle Ages as it does to academicians and the general public of today. Similarities do exist, to be sure. The central importance of academic organization and government to the problem of academic freedom was as apparent in the Middle Ages as it is today, and then as now, inspired and courageous leadership within the college or university arose

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 178.



to resist pressures for conformity on scholars.

In relating the corporate position of the universities to the social structure of the Middle Ages, Mr. Hofstadter describes the universities in this manner:

. . . centers of power and prestige, protected and courted, even deferred to, by emperors and popes. They held this position chiefly because great importance was attached to learning, not only as a necessary part of the whole spiritual enterprise, but also for its own sake. . . . If the universities were spiritual centers, they were scarcely less important as agencies of practical life, whose work was as relevant to the ecclesiastical and political life of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as the modern university is to the scientific and industrial life of our time.<sup>6</sup>

Because he believes that "freedom, if it is to be meaningful must ultimately be exercised by individuals," Hofstadter moves quickly to an examination of personal freedom.<sup>7</sup> He comes to the conclusion that the medieval period "was neither the nightmare of dogmatism, cruelty, and suppression that it was held to be by the rationalist scholars of the nineteenth century nor the magnificently open ground for free expression that some modern medievalists at times seem to be portraying."<sup>8</sup> In terms of the individual scholar,

he enjoyed a measure of freedom--large enough to make possible creative work of great value but limited enough to bring creative thinkers again and again into conflict with authority--most commonly the authority of their own university colleagues. When such conflicts arose it was not always authority that, in the long run, triumphed.<sup>9</sup>

However, in order to understand this thesis, it is necessary to remember that Mr. Hofstadter is examining academic freedom, not in terms of modern

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

thought but rather in the spirit of the academic experiences and ideas of the medieval period. With this in mind, the Church, while not theoretically liberal, appears in practice as somewhat less than the completely stifling creature portrayed by some historians.

For the sake of brevity, perhaps the most worthwhile consideration here should be what the scholars thought academic freedom was and what means they used to gain it. The place from which to start must be the basic proposition of education-- "The accepted Christian ideal of the intellectual enterprise was that of a system of knowledge partly stemming from and entirely consistent with the faith."<sup>10</sup> This becomes a problem, for "freedom implies choice and choice implies the existence of diversity of ideas and beliefs."<sup>11</sup> The endeavor for academic freedom against positive authority then involves working in and around the prevailing system while still upholding the central doctrine. Obviously, however, this approach in time produced a disunion between the area of faith and revelation on one hand and the area of senses, reason, and intellectual knowledge on the other. Mr. Hofstadter suggests several means by which scholars preserved their freedom of thought, expressed their findings, and stood on their beliefs while remaining at relative harmony within the system. First, they could move to the geographical location where their particular philosophies were accepted; or they could simply "ignore condemnations and censures without openly challenging them." Too, teaching was an informal situation and it would be difficult to gather sufficient

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

evidence with only students' notes from which to draw. The Averroists found a significant answer in the double truth-- "that is, of asserting that what is true in theology can be false in philosophy and vice versa."<sup>12</sup>

The following conclusion is drawn:

The duality between faith and reason that found its inception in the problems of the heterodox Aristotelians tended to free the speculative mind from doctrinal limitations by making it possible to follow the play of natural reason while paying full respect to the demands of faith.<sup>13</sup>

To the escape mechanism of "double truth" can be added the method of probable argument, a method whereby men arrive at ". . . propositions which were probable to them and which may be in themselves true or false but can not at the moment be known as true or false."<sup>14</sup>

As the power and corporate autonomy declined, some of these university methods also lost force. Scholars could no longer move from place to place, universities could not be packed up and transported overnight to another locality, masters could not close the doors of the university in protest for the universities became settled, endowed, and supported, tied to permanent libraries. With this state of affairs came greater control and intervention. As national states arose, the political powers entered the academic area and secular meddling in internal university affairs became commonplace. Science, in order to develop in this period, grew outside of the university system thus rendering the story of academic freedom within this system considerably less significant.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-33.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-53.

The idea of religious toleration is central to the theme of modern academic freedom, for as Mr. Hofstadter recognizes, "Academic freedom and religious freedom have one root in common: both are based upon the freedom of conscience, hence neither can flourish in a community that has no respect for human individuality."<sup>16</sup> Persecution of religious dissenters requires three things.. "The persecutor must be sure that he was right on the point of dogma at issue; he must be sure that the issue was important . . . and not inessential; and he must be convinced that coercion is actually effective."<sup>17</sup> The story of religious toleration emphasizes the weakening of primarily the last assumption. Many men found persecution a breach of Christian charity; the idea that man is prone to error became recognized; the quest for truth reached a validity in its own right.

In reference to toleration in the university, "the first consequences of the Reformation were disastrous."<sup>18</sup> Each German university now became a confessional institution with the confessed faith decided upon by the political ruler of each particular area. England fared no better, for with the Reformation began the humbling of the universities. The only bright light in the English reformation was the situation where change occurred so rapidly that a great deal of doctrinal uncertainty was present and men could exercise some freedom within this framework. The other alternatives were to move, migrate or to develop academies.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 62.      <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 64

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

The result of this latter choice had profound influences on both English and American higher education, for these schools were of high caliber, in a position to encourage freedom of inquiry, and staffed by the most energetic academic minds. The graduates of these schools brought with them to America this liberalizing influence and were responsible in some degree ". . . for the notable gains of American education during the earliest years of the American Enlightenment."<sup>19</sup>

The approaches to the development of higher education to 1800 in America can take many roads. Perhaps for the purposes of this study, it is best to concentrate on the unique characteristics of American higher education. The early system was unique in three features: (1) Private denominational sponsorship combined with some state supervision was new. (2) American colleges were colleges, not universities—they had no professional faculties and they did not cluster around great centers of learning. (3) The pattern of college government placed the final authority in a body of laymen rather than in the academic community.<sup>20</sup>

As mentioned in connection with the European system, before there can be freedom, there must be religious toleration. The early Puritans held to the idea that "anyone who was willing to tolerate the active propagation of a religion other than his own was simply not sincere in it," and anyone who could not accept the basic tenets of the Puritan doctrine must be prepared for banishment.<sup>21</sup> How then did Harvard, the citadel of freedom and liberal thought in America for 300 years, develop

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-76.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

in this climate? At its founding it was meant to "be the orthodox instrument of the community and the faith" with emphasis on the training and education of the clergy.<sup>22</sup> However, the first teachers were Oxford and Cambridge trained and knew only a tradition of liberal learning of all students. Add to this the basic Puritan idea of rationalization of the faith and the place of real learning and the respect for it in the area of the religion, and it is possible to see seeds for future liberality.<sup>23</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter cautions against making too big a case against early religious freedom and shows throughout his book that although these colleges had been founded in orthodoxy, they were liberal arts colleges, not theological schools; that the proportion of the student body training for the ministry sharply declined; that no colonial college required for student admission an adherence to a certain creed or doctrine. He explains later in regard to the latter that competition among the colleges for students made doctrinal admission requirements impossible. But, in applying religious tolerance to the faculty the opposite is true. Close religious conformity was required and the teacher was expected to uphold the theological doctrines of the college.<sup>24</sup>

In a discussion of lay government, the point is made that the shift from the medieval practice of self-government by a guild of masters to the Calvinistic assumption of lay control in a "gathered community" of the elect made it inevitable that the Corporation of Harvard should come

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 82

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

to consist, not of the faculty, but of laymen. The system of lay government created special problems for free teaching and scholarship in America as indicated:

It has hampered the development of organization, initiative and self-confidence among American college professors, and it has contributed, along with other forces in American life lowering their status in the community. Other professional groups have far greater power to determine the standards and conduct of their own professions.<sup>25</sup>

This system was not planned by the founders but grew out of the religious and social life and several unique aspects are emphasized. As men who were not clerics became part of the governing bodies of the churches, extension of this practice to colleges was a simple step. Private benefactors were necessary for the early years of the colleges, and as a father hesitates to give up control of his children, so it was next to impossible for this private control of the colleges, once begun, to be eliminated. And again, with the absence of a professional teaching class, someone had to provide continuity and direction. With an absentee governing body, one can easily imagine a vacuum, and the filling of this vacuum by the college president is an important part of the story of higher education. Playing a "multiple role," as teacher, administrator, preacher, head of the faculty, the president ". . . occupied and in a sense created an office which has no equivalent in academic systems of the United States."<sup>26</sup> And as such he was the only member of the college with enough prestige and power to fight for any form of academic freedom.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 120.      <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-25.

Chosen as the most significant trend in collegiate education in the 18th century is the secularization of the colleges, and the rise of science is termed the most impressive aspect of curricular changes during this period. There was little evidence of a conflict between religion and science and its introduction into the schools was without great incident. This "remarkable" state of affairs is traced to the previously mentioned hospitality of Puritanism to scientific inquiry.<sup>28</sup>

In his closing chapter, Mr. Hofstadter lays forth the thesis that after the enlightenment of the 18th century came a period of theological and clerical control and repression from which relief was experienced only through the Darwinian controversy. He terms this movement "the Great Retrogression."<sup>29</sup>

One of the prime factors in this retrogression was the fragmentation of higher education--from nine colleges in 1780 to 182 by 1860, from geographical concentration to scattering and multiplying of colleges. The cause of this trend is laid at the door of denomination groups, with their anti-freedom attitudes and their desires for a doctrinaire education for their members. Coupled with this trend was the greater concern placed on costs of travel to gain an education rather than a concern over the education itself. Local pride and self-interest and the rise of fundamentalism were other factors.<sup>30</sup>

How is academic freedom affected by fragmentation? Mr. Hofstadter proposes that the larger the size of these early institutions, the higher the quality of the education given by that institution and the more

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 194-99.      <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 209.      <sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 210-13.



self-assertive and powerful the faculties. This lack of professionalism on the part of the ill-compensated teacher in terms of money, prestige and intellectual satisfaction, led the dissatisfied to move on many times the other professions.<sup>31</sup>

Any profession is in a bad way when its members can seek freedom most effectually by leaving it. The absence of mature professionalism contributed, as did denominationalism, fragmentation, and poverty, to the inadequacies of the old-time college. Professors suffered, but their students and the community often bore the greater share of the loss.<sup>32</sup>

Between 1800 and 1860, Mr. Hofstadter notices "a more or less continuous struggle . . . for a freer atmosphere in education."<sup>33</sup> However, contrary to what might be expected, Jacksonian democracy was not a positive force for academic freedom. Rather it was a leveling, an equalizing of opportunity, a disdain for authority and excellence, and an impetus for formal training. Colleges and universities became in the popular mind a haven for the rich, the privileged. This democracy according to Hofstadter's quotation from Howard Beale, was "pious and intolerant."<sup>34</sup>

As in the medieval period, various sanctions could be invoked to gain some measure of academic freedom. An appeal could be made to religious liberty, on the grounds of constitutional rights, etc. But in the name of academic freedom itself, very little could be done. Some breakthroughs were evident, however, and Mr. Hofstadter concludes:

The soundest educational reformers of the period--those who proposed not to chop up or debase the existing curriculum so much as to

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 223-31.      <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 232.      <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 239;

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Beale quoted in A History of Freedom of Teaching in American Schools, p. 247.

supplement it by plans for systems of more advanced study--walked hand in hand with those who had a perception of the professor's need for dignity and freedom. The time was not far in the future when a college president could proclaim to the American community what the founders of the first European universities had understood from the beginning: "Professors are sometimes spoken of as working for the college. They are the college."<sup>35</sup>

This book is more than an exposé on academic freedom. It is a history of higher education. Mr. Hofstadter has written his history to serve as a basis for the explanation for the subsequent growth of the modern educational superstructure. If the author is optimistic, it is only very cautiously so, and the attitude expressed indicates that a sense of responsibility on the part of those connected with academic life is vital. In writing about the factors in academic life and in the culture at large which have created and sustained freedom as well as about the forces that have ranged themselves against the freedom of teaching, Mr. Hofstadter again has a utilitarian motive above and beyond that of investigating an historical problem and advancing arguments pro and con. In the final analysis, this "wider purpose" is in the form of a warning best expressed by him in dealing with freedom of thought during the Civil War period:

The breakup of the American union and the resort to war is perhaps the best instance in our history of the principle that societies that do imagine themselves unable to meet the costs of free discussion are likely to be presented with a much more exorbitant bill.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

C. BOOK THREE

Social Darwinism in American Thought was first published under the auspices of the Albert J. Beveridge Memorial Fund of the American Historical Association and was written while Richard Hofstadter was on a fellowship at Columbia in 1944.<sup>1</sup> It served as his doctoral dissertation.

The main questions in an analysis of this book must be:

What is Mr. Hofstadter trying to prove, why, and how?  
With what commonly-held ideas does he take exception,  
why, and how?

The emphasis in this book is upon the effects of Darwin's work upon social thinking in the United States in several social disciplines-- sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, political science, economics, education. Reference is made to possible consequences felt even today although social Darwinism has disappeared from the scene as a conscious philosophy. Mr. Hofstadter feels the United States is the country of social Darwinism, pointing to its quick reception and an intellectual climate which provided a favorable environment.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter in his introduction and throughout his book proposes the following ideas for his readers' consideration listed in the order of importance or emphasis.

1. Social Darwinism with the biological concept of survival of the fittest was primarily a utilitarian theory--it was used as a justification tool for many disciplines, for diverse ideas, for different movements, in different periods, by numerous interpreters.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought (2nd ed. rev.; Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

2. "Changes in the structure of social ideas wait on general changes in economics and political life."<sup>3</sup> The important criteria for the acceptance of ideas are not truth and logic but suitability to the needs of the time.
3. In the Darwinian age, the prevailing political mood was conservative and those who wished to defend the political status quo found this concept highly useful, for the ideas expressed in the popular phrases of "survival of the fittest" and "struggle for existence" seemed to give full approval to the competitive, laissez-faire notion of "may the best man win." The claim that in nature all development must be slow and gradual was seized upon to buttress the "hands-off," no government intervention or reform philosophy. Any reform would only interfere with nature, would be an attempt to do what by nature was inherently impossible and would lead in the end to degeneration.<sup>4</sup>
4. This conservatism in the form of social Darwinism had unusual characteristics for it was an almost irreligious conservatism; with a chief conclusion that government functions should be minimal, it could be very nearly labeled anarchial; it tried to free itself of the more usual ties of sentiment and emotion. It follows that this conservatism was the most "utterly progressive" in the entire history of thought.<sup>5</sup>
5. The above naturally leads into one of Mr Hofstadter's most consistent themes, a theme found in more than one of his books. This is the idea that in American political tradition, "The side of the 'right'-- . . . the side devoted to property and less given to popular enthusiasms and democratic professions--has been throughout the greater part of our history identified with men who, while political conservatives, were in economic and social terms headlong innovators and daring promoters." (Italics mine) Those men who wanted to restore and conserve what they considered to be old values were found on the moderate left--Populists and Progressives, Jacksonians, Jeffersonians. Roosevelt and the New Deal represented the first time in American history that the liberal side of American politics was also the side of innovation and experiment.<sup>6</sup>
6. Mr. Hofstadter is prepared to be indulgent of the "intellectual gaucheries" he sees committed in the social Darwinism era for to him truth is found after many erroneous and futile side trips.<sup>7</sup>
7. The dissenters and critics of social Darwinism did not throw out Darwinism but objected to the different interpretations of it. In the end, they were working for the survival of all instead of only the fit.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.,. p.204.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

8. The outstanding irony of the situation was that the writers, advocating Darwinism with its ideas of slow change, adaptation to the environment and survival of the fittest, were holding up as the fittest, the very men responsible for the rapid transformation of the society.
9. The social and economic interpretations of Darwinism have striking implications and explanations for today. The controversy over the merits of the welfare state is in one sense continued by men raised under the shadow of social Darwinism--the "stern minority among us" still finding meaning in the older economic ethic which for a society where there is a split between the economic process and the development of human character, is a source of "torment."<sup>8</sup>
10. The importance of the Darwinism theory as a basic force in American life must not be overemphasized.

Now, the method Mr. Hofstadter uses to prove his theses is to review the ideas during this period of intellectuals and reformers such as Louis Agassiz, John Fiske, Asa Gray, Edward Youmans, Henry Ward Beecher, Herbert Spencer, Edward Bellamy, William Graham Sumner, Lester Ward, Henry Drummond, Benjamin Kidd, Washington Gladden, Lyman Abbott, Herbert Croly, William James, John Dewey, Richard Ely, Simon Patten, Thorstein Veblen, Albion Small, James Baldwin, Charles Colley, and then to show what social Darwinism meant to them and what uses they made of it.

The independent thinkers in America were dissatisfied with the incomplete answers that were being given to many complex problems such as the riddle of the species, the meaning of science, the hypothesis of special creation; and they seized upon Darwinism with vigor. In the realm of science, although the adjustment from old traditional ways was "a painful process," scientists accepted Darwinism. The old notion of fixity of species was inadequate and like other independent thinkers, men of science found Darwinism providing more satisfactory and complete answers.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

Most noteworthy in the area of the universities was not the strength of resistance but the rapidity with which the new ideas took hold. Aided by the prior conversion of scientists, and the reform movement to put greater stress on science, the new philosophy moved in with comparatively little controversy.<sup>10</sup>

The churches represented the hardiest stronghold of traditional ideas but while large numbers of devout persons remained untouched, "the intellectually alert members of more liberal Protestant denominations" soon accepted the new ideas.<sup>11</sup> For some time there had been "vague emotional stirrings and intellectual dissatisfactions [with traditional theology] which helped to create a frame of mind for a theology liberal enough to embrace the concept of evolution."<sup>12</sup> Strenuous opposition at the outset, with the impossibility of a reconciliation between theism and Darwinism as the chief clerical argument, gave way in the face of public acceptance by foremost theologians like James McCosh and Henry Ward Beecher. Scientists such as Asa Gray labored on the side of religion to show that no conflict should exist. Beecher's idea that "religion, as a spiritual fixture in the character of man, would be unmoved" pointed the way as evolution was translated into divine purpose.<sup>13</sup>

In examining Mr. Hofstadter's interpretation of Spencer, it might be well to ascertain why Spencer is emphasized, why and how he was accepted in the United States and what he believed.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-29.

For works in the sphere of philosophy and sociology, the figure of 368,755 books sold by Spencer in the United States from 1860-1903 is phenomenal.<sup>14</sup> Joining to this the reception Spencer received on his visit to America, it is impossible to avoid recognizing him as a noteworthy figure in the eyes of the American public. He became so widely accepted in the United States that all American philosophical thinkers had to reckon with him. He left an indelible mark, the result of which was a "paralysis of the will to reform."<sup>15</sup>

Because Spencer's philosophy was scientific, comprehensive, a theory of progress, a world system which could be all things to all men, Mr. Hofstadter finds it suitable to the American scene.<sup>16</sup> In New England, "the effects of transcendentalism and Unitarianism were . . . breaking up the old orthodoxies."<sup>17</sup> "Post-bellum America was like a vast human caricature of the Darwinian struggle for existence and survival of the fittest."<sup>18</sup> Then, too, Spencer seemed to be "telling the guardians of American society what they wanted to hear."<sup>19</sup> Therefore, his philosophy was used as a justification of the existing state of affairs.

The basic tenets of Spencerian thought for the purpose of this study can be summarized as follows:<sup>20</sup>

1. Belief in evolution, conservation of energy, with the final result as the establishment of a stable, harmonious state coupled with perfection and complete happiness.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 34.      <sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-47.      <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 33.      <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 44.      <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-40.

2. The possibility and need for reconciling religion and science.
3. The use of biology to strengthen laissez-faire--the right of every man to do as he pleases as long as he does not infringe upon the rights of others. The sole function of the state then, is negative, an insurance that the individual's freedom is not curbed. Even state aid to the poor is unacceptable for the poor are unfit. Coupled with this is the absolute freedom of individual enterprise.
4. The fittest survive and if men 'are sufficiently complete to live, they do live, and it is well they should live. If they are not sufficiently complete to live, they die, and it is best they should die.'<sup>21</sup>
5. The promise that "whatever the immediate hardships for a large portion of mankind, evolution meant progress and thus assured that the whole process of life was tending toward some very remote but altogether glorious consummation."<sup>22</sup>

Next the figure of William Graham Sumner, "Social Darwinist,"<sup>23</sup> brings forth questions such as--who was Sumner? How did he use Darwinism to justify and explain his own ideas? What did he believe?

Sumner, according to Mr. Hofstadter was the "most vigorous and influential social Darwinist in America . . . a great Puritan preacher, exponent of the classical pessimism, . . . an assimilator and popularizer of evolution," and a man who derived support for his major premises from Spencer.<sup>24</sup> This doctrinaire figure was a crusader against reformism, protectionism, socialism and government intervention. Sumner's characteristics show him as pessimistic, Calvinistic, secular, anti-emotional, an exponent of predestination and of individual self-assertion. He spoke of the necessity of labor, of self-denial, of the inevitability of suffering. For him, the industrious, frugal, middle-class Protestant was the equivalent of the fittest.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 6

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-54.



Sumner applied Darwin's natural selection of the fitter organisms to social selection of fitter men. The idea of citizens with a greater store of economic virtues was lifted from Darwin's idea of organic forms with superior adaptability. Spencer's survival of the fittest and the selection process by means of competition produced the captains of industry.<sup>26</sup> The result was Spencerian--the progress of civilization. For Sumner felt,

"If we do not like the survival of the fittest, we have only one possible alternative, and that is the survival of the unfittest. The former is the law of civilization; the latter is the law of anti-civilization. We have our choice between the two, or we can go on, as in the past, vacillating between the two, but a third plan--the socialist desideratum--a plan for nourishing the unfit--test and yet advancing in civilization, no man will ever find."<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, democracy is only a phase; equality and evolution are not two unreconcilable principles. In attacking reforms, Sumner used Spencer's social determinism to emphasize slow change and to point out that society can not be quickly refashioned by reforms.

Sumner called for men to face up to the hardships of life and hard work, and to save. The maintenance of the status quo, the opposition to government intervention, and the realization that economic life was a field of reward and punishment are expressions of Sumner's ideas. To him, reality was not consistent with equality, optimism, man's ability to will his destiny. The two main themes running through his work are "the predestination of the social order and . . . salvation of the economically elect through the survival of the fittest."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-66.

Lester Ward, first President of the American Sociological Society and the pioneering critic of intellectual systems, is placed in the role of a champion of the masses by Mr. Hofstadter.<sup>29</sup> His primary aim was to destroy the "tradition of biological sociology." Ward himself accepted Darwinism but not in Spencer's monistic approach. To Ward, animals and humans were different and while environment transforms animals, man transforms environment. Therefore, sociology must be a special discipline dealing with a unique level of organization. Spencer's idea that nature's ways should be man's ways evoked sharp criticism from Ward, for to him man must understand and direct the laws of nature, not imitate them.<sup>30</sup>

This critic replaced Spencer's passive determinism with a positive body of social thought adaptable for the use of reform and then went on to advocate social planning and organized, guided reform. Darwinian slow change did not apply to man, for man society could be improved. However, under the present intellectual views, any government intervention would be in complete conflict. These views had to change, and Ward considered as ridiculous, in the age of popular representative government, the current opposition to governmental intervention. The improvement in society would lead to an increase in total enjoyment and a decrease in total suffering, for to Ward the favors of this world were not distributed according to merit.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 67.      <sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-74.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 75-79.

The age in which the philosophies of Spencer, Sumner, and Ward were formulated according to Mr. Hodstadter was an age of great intellectual insecurity, with questions being raised on the meaning of Darwinism in religion, morals, philosophy. Consequently, between 1871 and 1900, there was much popular discussion on "the meaning of Darwinism for ethics, politics, and social affairs."

Many different men were involved, for Darwinism appealed to "rugged individualists and ruthless imperialists" as well as to "those who stood for social solidarity and fraternity."<sup>32</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter quotes and summarizes the views and suggestions of several men on the effects of evolution on ethics and society. Whatever the confusion and diversity of these views, he finds a decided trend toward the endorsement of solidarism: "They saw the group as the unit of survival and minimized . . . the individual aspect of competition."<sup>33</sup> They took from Darwin as a basic fact in evolution the idea of social solidarity as a natural phenomenon.

In the latter part of the century after two panics, a depression, and labor uprisings, a stream of dissenting opinions arose on the merits of the free competitive order which began to transform the material base of the Spencer-Sumner ideology. Organized purposeful reform became the object of attention by the Populists, Progressives, etc. and turned to include the new-threatened man of the middle class.

Dissenting opinions came from the social gospel movement among newly interested clergy which urged a "compromise between the hard individualism

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-91.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

of the competitive order and the possible dangers of socialism," with attention focused on labor problems. They, too, made use of Darwinism, for although they detested the free competitive order, they liked Spencer's social-organism concept and now in a non-Spencerian manner, spoke of social salvation and the changing of the social order by changing the character of individuals. This movement spread to an encouragement of "public regulation of basic industry . . . and paved the way for all socially-minded Protestant movements of a later day."<sup>34</sup>

Such outstanding spokesmen of urban discontent as Henry George and Edward Bellamy worked to refute the conservative elements of evolutionary sociology. Socialists and Marxist socialists followed suit with their dissenting opinions. DeVries' biological concept of the sudden changes or mutations in nature aided the socialists in supporting their theories of the sudden reconstruction of society. However, through all of the social criticism runs one common thread, "Only when biology seemed to agree with their social preconceptions were they ready to build a sociology upon it."<sup>35</sup>

After 1900, reflecting the Progressive spirit, pragmatism became the "dominant American philosophy."<sup>36</sup> The main difference between Spencerian evolutionism and pragmatism was in the approach to the relationship between organism and environment. Spencerian philosophy referred to such ideas as the environment as a fixed norm, the helplessness of man, passivity, fatalism, causation, determinism and control of man by environment, absolutism, the neglect of the active role of the mind. On

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 106-110.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 110-117.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

the other hand, pragmatism pointed to an environment to be manipulated, freedom and control of environment by man, acknowledgement of human effort in the bettering of life, using theories as experimental instruments rather than absolute answers, spontaneity, and indeterminacy.<sup>37</sup> The pragmatic philosophies did not throw out Darwinism—they used it. This growing philosophy was "an application of evolutionary biology to human ideas in the sense that it emphasized the study of ideas as instruments of the organism."<sup>38</sup>

William James continued to emphasize the individual with no desire for collective social reform. Both James and Dewey believed in the "effectiveness of intelligence as an instrument in modifying the world," but Dewey brought to light a "strong consciousness of its social importance [this philosophy's] and an urgent sense of the social responsibility of the philosopher."<sup>39</sup> Dewey's interpretation was biological in orientation, for he thought of knowledge as a part of nature and the mind as an "organ of service" for control of the environment. Thus, under Dewey's guidance, the concepts of faith in knowledge, experimentation, activity and control came to the fore.<sup>40</sup>

Turning now to trends in social theory from 1890 to 1915, the previously overlooked area of economics must be taken into consideration. In Mr. Hofstadter's view, social Darwinism made much less of an impact on economic theory than on any other discipline, probably because classical economists had their own doctrine of social selection. The premises of

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 123-33.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-41.

economic science easily fitted the pattern of Darwinian individualism. Economists did use Darwinism to fortify their already erected structure and to justify competition as the struggle for existence. Younger scholars attacked classical economics, especially its dogmatism, and its insistence on the laissez-faire idea. In the statement of principles of the newly formed American Economic Association, the following statement appears: 'We regard the state as an agency whose positive assistance is one of the indispensable conditions of human progress.'<sup>41</sup> Thorstein Veblen used Darwinism in a peculiar way. He saw in the Darwinian science, a "loom upon which the whole fabric of economic thinking could be rewoven."<sup>42</sup>

Turning to sociology, Mr. Hofstadter states, "The most important change in sociological method was its estrangement from biology and the tendency to place social studies on a psychological foundation."<sup>43</sup> However, the new psychology with its foremost representatives, Dewey and Veblen, portrayed the human organism as more than a "mere machine for the reception and registering of pleasure-pain stimuli."<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, this was a truly social psychology with emphasis upon social conditioning and the relationship between the individual and institutions.<sup>45</sup>

In the Progressive era, then, the general trend of thought was toward collective social action. Mr. Hofstadter refers to a minor

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

"renaissance" in American thought in which the "most original thinkers in social science" ceased making the justification and perpetuation of existing society their main aim. Now, they set to work to accurately describe this society, to understand it in the new light, and to improve it.<sup>46</sup>

The opponents and defenders of imperialism, expansion and militarism, too, pointed to the world of nature as a justification of their plans. It must be remembered that this was a justification of an already formulated theory and idea which had appeared on the scene before Darwinism. Anglo-Saxonism came as a "product of modern nationalism and the romantic movement" but Darwinism was used in its defense and in its criticism.<sup>47</sup> The idea of the survival of the fittest was often heard especially by expansionists.

No military cult existed in the United States so those advocating preparedness had to use many arguments to back up their plans. Anti-imperialists turned to Darwin, too, and the outstanding spokesman, David Starr Jordan, showed that war was a biological evil destroying the fit and the unfit. However, during World War I, a great change occurred. The United States entered the war on the theme of anti-militarism which meant in the popular mind increasing hostility to biological militarism, for this was felt to be the enemy's philosophy. Thus social Darwinism in a negative manner became linked in men's minds with Nietzsche and von Bernhardi.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 167-69.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-96.

The final question to be asked and reviewed is this: How did this basically neutral philosophy become used as an apology for competition and force? As Mr. Hofstadter states throughout his book, the answer lies in American society itself. As long as unrestrained competition reigned, the ideas of natural selection and survival of the fittest provided it with a more than adequate defense. Again, when the American public turned on this image and the picture of the industrial brute began to rise, Darwinian individualism had to give way to Darwinian collectivism. As America expanded and became imperialistic, Darwinian collectivism with national and racial tones served as a strong defending theory. "The survival of the fittest had once been used chiefly to support business competition at home; now it was to support expansion abroad."<sup>49</sup> But then came World War I as previously mentioned and social Darwinism fell into a decline from which it never recovered. At this moment, "Darwinian individualism is no longer congenial to the mood of the nation," but as Mr. Hofstadter points out, a part of it has grown into our society, for the term "survival of the fittest" has a fixed place in the American popular vocabulary.<sup>50</sup>

One more item needs emphasis. Throughout this volume, Mr. Hofstadter goes behind the men whose writings he is studying to gather meaning for their words from their background.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 202-3.      <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 51, 63, 64, 71, 82, 141.



D. BOOK FOUR

A brief analysis of any book containing twelve detailed essays would be a difficult problem but it is especially true in this instance, for the essays in The American Political Tradition are not merely historical essays, they are studies in psychological depth with varying value and importance.<sup>1</sup> These essays represent an interpretative study, often biographical, of men chosen as excellent representatives of main currents in American political sentiment--seven outstanding presidents, two presidential hopefuls, an anti-slavery agitator, and some of the founding Fathers and the post-Civil War mediocrities.

A book without a hero, it spans American history from the Constitutional Convention to the present. One of the motives in the writing of this book is the desire to bring the current American popular mind up-to-date. Mr. Hofstadter believes that Americans, because of a deep sense of insecurity and lack of faith in the future, try to glorify their past without trying to understand it--a glorification termed "the national nostalgia."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hofstadter is guided in his writing by the conviction that "a democratic society . . . can more safely be over-critical than overindulgent . . ." toward its leaders.<sup>3</sup> By realistically and critically examining the past and present values and political beliefs, then, much of the deadwood of sentimentality can be cut down.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (New York: Vintage Books, 1954).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. v.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xi.

By this examination of the past, Mr. Hofstadter is certain it will be evident that past historians, stressing crisis and conflict, have created a distortion by hiding the essential unity of cultural and political tradition and a central faith in the aims and values of a capitalist culture. He believes major political traditions have had in common a belief in the sanctity of private property, of economic individualism, of the value of competition and the role of politics as a protector but notcrippler of the competitive world. The American leader who falsely believes himself to be a radical or reformer is actually a conservative bounded by these horizons of capitalism, racial and social inequalities, fierce nationalism and isolationism. Thus, even in the hands of liberals, the political tradition is essentially conservative.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter also wishes to destroy certain myths about these leaders, myths created and sustained by Americans. He does this by re-emphasizing facets of their careers which have been neglected.

The best approach then will be to examine each of these essays by itself with the hope that Hofstadter's major thesis will stand out. Because the book itself is a very sensitive and interpretive study, many interpretations of it are possible and this analysis represents only one.

The Founding Fathers: an Age of Realism

The founding Fathers were an aristocratic lot of realists, who feared democracy and proclaimed freedom for man while they imposed restraints upon his supposedly rapacious nature. A popular misconception

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

of today is the idea that these Fathers wanted democracy and had the 20th century ideas of equality, liberty, and freedom uppermost in their minds. Mr. Hofstadter says this is not true, that the situation is ironical. "The Constitution . . . is based upon a political theory that at one crucial point stands in direct antithesis to the main stream of American democratic faith."<sup>5</sup> Instead of liberty and democracy being one and the same thing, the Fathers felt that liberty was menaced by democracy for the liberty to which they were referring was a negative liberty linked to property. This liberty was a freedom from anything that would harm property.

Central to the Fathers' political ideas was the conviction that man was unregenerate, unchangeable and selfish but also that the power of government must rest in the people or else it would rest in the hands of a monarchy. The solution to these contradictions then was to check "vice with vice, check interest with interest, class with class, faction with faction, one branch of government with another in a harmonious system of mutual frustration."<sup>6</sup>

In another book, a slightly more emphatic approach is taken. "The delegates at the Federal Convention were, with few exceptions, men convinced of the need for a stronger central government."<sup>7</sup> The founding Fathers thought of themselves as moderate republicans and Mr. Hofstadter

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 10.      <sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-9.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Hofstadter (ed.), Great Issues in American History, 1765-1865 (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), I, 83.

feels this view is correct.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas Jefferson: the Aristocrat as Democrat

Thomas Jefferson, less the Apostle of Democracy than the champion of specific property interests, is portrayed as a classic example of an aristocrat whose achievements in the direction of democracy have been exaggerated.

In examining the mythology surrounding Thomas Jefferson, Mr. Hofstadter points first to the title given him as revolutionist because of the sweeping reforms he inaugurated in his state of Virginia. Even Jefferson himself claimed too much in this area for these reforms met with very little resistance, a sure sign that they struck at already crumbling foundations, that they did away with practices already rotting from disuse.

The picture of Jefferson as an impractical visionary is not consistent with reality. His mind and his writings were occupied with matter-of-fact projects, with practical inventions of every type and with practical standards of values. Neither was he a strong-headed doctrinaire for he was a shy man who hated controversy, aiming usually for a minimum program void of conflict. He was ambiguous, for his doctrinaire remarks and ideas are to be found in his personal writings, not in his public life.<sup>9</sup>

Jefferson as a physiocrat is termed "preposterous."<sup>10</sup> In another article written in 1941, "Parrington and the Jeffersonian

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<sup>8</sup>Hofstadter, American Political Tradition, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-25.      <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

Tradition,"<sup>11</sup> Mr. Hofstadter elaborates on this theme by attacking Parrington's emphasis "upon the influence of French economic thought, particularly the doctrines of the Physiocrats, in forming the intellectual temper, social ideas on political action of the early Jeffersonian tradition."<sup>12</sup>

The Physiocrats highly valued agricultural life and Jefferson highly valued agricultural life; therefore, Jefferson was a Physiocrat. Mr. Hofstadter finds this illogical, for Jefferson referred to the unsurpassed values of agrarian life before he met the Physiocrats. "The Physiocratic theory was based on the conception that the landed class having special bounties of nature and society, should pay taxes as a duty."<sup>13</sup> Jefferson and Franklin both shrank from any proposals or application of this basic part of the theory, nor did either ever advocate Physiocracy in any American public writing. Hofstadter moves on to show that Jefferson accepted Adam Smith's ideas and with them, the labor theory of value. He points to the Jefferson-Hamilton struggle as a part of the "world-wide struggle between laissez-faire and economic nationalism," not as a conflict between the principles of Quesnay and Adam Smith.<sup>14</sup>

Jefferson was a man who sincerely feared power placed anywhere but in the hands of the majority and he was a "fierce patriot and sincere pacifist."<sup>15</sup> To him the only good society was one maintained by a nation

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<sup>11</sup>Richard Hofstadter, "Parrington and the Jeffersonian Tradition," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. II, No. 4 (1941), pp. 391-400.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 391.      <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 394.      <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 399.

<sup>15</sup>Hofstadter, American Political Tradition, p. 40.

of farmers. Central to his beliefs was his "faith in the farmers, his distrust of the urban classes and his belief in the long-range value of rebellions and social disturbances."<sup>16</sup> Easily stemming from this was his conviction that the "propertied interest in society is necessary to a stable political mentality."<sup>17</sup>

The struggle between Federalism and Jeffersonianism, as popularly conceived, was not a struggle between two different philosophies but between two different kinds of property--agrarian class versus mercantile and investing class.

Although the Federalists and Jeffersonians raged at each other with every appearance of a better and indissoluble opposition, differences in practical policy boiled down to a very modest minimum when Jefferson took power, and before long the two parties were indistinguishable.<sup>18</sup>

On taking over the presidency, Jefferson, for fear of disrupting the economy, could not throw out the Hamiltonian system, but could only trim at the edges. "In politics then, the strategy was conciliation; in economics it was compromise."<sup>19</sup> Because of the embargo, the United States had to develop its own manufacturing system. Ironically, Jefferson actually began American industrialism and became a "convert to the development of manufactures."<sup>20</sup>

#### Andrew Jackson and the Rise of Liberal Capitalism

The picture of Andrew Jackson as a typical democratic frontiersman according to Mr. Hofstadter is a real distortion, for he was accepted in

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. ix.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

Tennessee as an aristocrat and his tastes, manners, and style of life were shaped accordingly.

A paradox is in evidence here. Jackson evolved as a national democratic leader but previous to his election to the presidency, he disapproved of the popular movement of Americans in the political area. After the panic, Americans realizing the relationship between their welfare and politics began a trend toward popular activity in politics but Jackson did not support this movement. In Tennessee he stood on the side of the haves and in active opposition to men whose programs resembled later Jacksonian democratic programs. Jackson himself admitted he would never have been elected if his economic views had been an issue.<sup>21</sup>

Neither a triumph of the frontier nor an uprising of the West against the East can be seen in the election of 1828, for Jackson swept most of the country. Jackson promised no changes in the economy and thus the idea of the election of 1828 as a mandate for economic reform is false. Jackson's election was the result of the rise of democracy rather than the cause, and a change in personnel rather than program was the final outcome. With the themes of "militant Nationalism and equal access to office," he was elected with no program to uproot property or reconstruct society on drastically different lines and without contributing any ideas or thoughts to this democratic movement.<sup>22</sup>

Jackson's philosophy was not directed toward the leveling of existing systems nor was it concerned with the equality of man. He realized

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-54.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

that full equality was impossible, existing distinctions were normal, and that reward should go to 'superior industry, economy and virtue.'<sup>23</sup> Thus, the Jacksonian revolution, movement, or philosophy was essentially a "phase in the expansion of liberated capitalism," a "movement of laissez-faire" and "an attempt to divorce government and business."<sup>24</sup>

The Bank stood as the symbol of all exclusive privileged monopolies and it shouldered the burden of many grievances not of itself. All those injured by economic privilege discharged their aggressions against the bank even though it had been a positive stabilizing force. The results of this bank war were negative and left the country with an inadequate currency system. From a fight against political privilege, the Jacksonian movement broadened to a fight against economic privilege.<sup>25</sup> From another source, the following statement is made: "A more constructive aspect of the Jacksonian impulse against economic privilege was the movement to destroy the chartered privileges of old corporations in the various states, which stood in the way of competitive business and hampered the diffusion of economic opportunity."<sup>26</sup> Daniel Webster's observations may best describe the scene: 'Society is full of excitement: competition comes in place of monopoly; and intelligence and industry ask only for fair play and an open field.'<sup>27</sup>

John C. Calhoun: the Marx of the Master Class

John Calhoun, a minority spokesman in a democracy, a particularist

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 62.      <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 56.      <sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 59-67.

<sup>26</sup>Hofstadter, Great Issues in American History, I, 252.

<sup>27</sup>Hofstadter, American Political Tradition, p. 67.



in an age of nationalism, a slaveholder in a time of advancing liberties, an agrarian in a furiously capitalistic country, was a curious spectacle in American politics.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Hofstadter refers to him as "one of a few Americans of his age . . . who had a keen sense for social structure and class forces" and a man who "laid down an analysis of American politics which foreshadowed some of the seminal ideas of Marx's system."<sup>29</sup> In fact, Mr. Hofstadter becomes even more emphatic when he uses examples of Calhoun's prediction of the alliance between Northern conservatives and Southern reactionaries and of the impregnable Southern caste system to claim that his "analysis of American political tensions certainly ranks among the most impressive intellectual achievements of American statesmen."<sup>30</sup>

Described as a man without a childhood, living by abstractions, and extremely self-confident, Calhoun for twenty-two years had the job of retaining the sectional balance. He began as a Unionist but soon became a sectionalist as the militant Southern philosophy and defense mechanisms grew. This militance was first caused by the tariff, not by slavery. Calhoun, however, was one of the first who pointed to slavery as a positive good and the best of all possible relations between white and blacks.<sup>31</sup>

Calhoun saw "class struggle and exploitation in every epoch of human development."<sup>32</sup> His ideas, running parallel to Marxian ideas, included pervasive exploitation, class struggle, the labor theory of value, surplus

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 10.    <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 69.    <sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 87-88.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-79.    <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

appropriated by capitalists, the fall of working-class conditions to a level of subsistence, the growing revolt of laboring classes against capitalists. However, he proposed no revolution but expected to forestall it by a planter-capitalist collaboration. In return for the Southern contribution of stability, Northern conservatives would hold back the abolitionists in their own interest, for an overthrow of slavery would signal the rise of labor.<sup>33</sup>

Calhoun made several miscalculations. "Marx out of optimism and Calhoun out of pessimism both overestimated the revolutionary capacities of the working class."<sup>34</sup> Calhoun did not foresee the ease of the reconciliation of the Northern masses to capitalism, the expansion of the Northern free society and its safety valve effect, Northern restlessness as a source of strength, or that the conflict between capital and the Southern planter would erupt before the conflict between capital and labor.

As a stark reactionary, Calhoun failed for, "he tried to achieve a static solution for a dynamic situation . . . ." and based much of his theory on the idea of a society necessarily being built on a submerged and exploited labor force.<sup>35</sup>

To contradict a popular misconception, Mr. Hofstadter points out that Calhoun did not speak for the minorities in today's terms. He wished to protect minority privileges rather than rights and was interested in the propertied minority.<sup>36</sup>

#### Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth

Today, the Lincoln legend looms as the largest picture in political mythology. This legend gathers strength from its similarity to the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

Christian theme and the myth of the self-made man. However, there is an inherent tragedy here. For Lincoln personified simplicity and humility, but he was thoroughly and wholly a politician and politics were his life; yet, political success requires driving ambition and often this is in contrast to humility. Thus, Mr. Hofstadter emphasizes Lincoln as a politician rather than as a humanitarian, who tested democracy by its ability to provide opportunities for social ascent to those born in its lower ranks.<sup>37</sup>

As a member of the Whig party, the party of rank and privilege, of internal improvements, stable currency, and conservative banking, Lincoln had a philosophy of individualism and a passion for the great average. His attitude toward slavery shifted from a vague sense of wrong to the theory that it should be left alone in states where it existed but not be allowed to spread. It was not until Lincoln was forty-five that he denounced slavery in public. He then resolutely attacked the slave system only when it became politically expedient to do so. For, according to Mr. Hofstadter, Lincoln never believed in racial equality and held onto orthodox economic views advocating only mild reforms for the benefit of the common white men. Hofstadter goes further to give the impression that Lincoln used anti-Negro prejudices and ambiguities to gain political success. He had to unite a Whig party composed of humanitarian abolitionists and Negrophobes, for what really troubled the party was not the question of moral principles but a fear of the Negro, free or slave,

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

Lincoln handled the situation beautifully by taking it out of its moral setting and discussing it in terms of "free labor's self interest."<sup>38</sup> His great plea against slavery was its damage to white men. Where it went, white men could not go.<sup>39</sup>

When Lincoln took office as sincerely a man of peace, he accepted war only when it became clear that this was the only way in which union could be maintained. As President, he had to interpret the war to the people and this interpretation was essentially conservative--a war to maintain the status quo, to put things back as they were. However, in order to unite Northern opinion for the war, the North had to be put on the defensive. Lincoln accomplished this by his deliberate provoking of the Southerners in the Fort Sumter affair. The Confederates were left with the very meager choice of resisting the provisioning of the fort or having the continual presence of Union soldiers on their soil.

Lincoln intended to bring the South back into the Union with slavery intact. However, it became intolerable to many Northerners to fight a war against a slave power without fighting slavery itself. Lincoln opposed emancipation at first for he was determined to hold the strategic border states in the Union. Mr. Hofstadter feels Lincoln's actions necessarily had to be more conservative than his feelings, and he moved toward emancipation only with the failure of all other measures such as compensated emancipation and deportation and colonization of slaves to Africa and Central America. According to the author, Lincoln can be justly

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 104-13.

remembered as the Great Emancipator but not because of his signature on the Emancipation Proclamation. This document did not really free any slaves for it simply freed all slaves in the rebellious states where its effect could not reach. Rather, this title is deserved because of his necessary and influential work behind the scenes in promoting the 13th Amendment.<sup>40</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter calls attention to the idea of what "is the best measure of Lincoln's personal eminence in the human calendar--that he was chastened and not intoxicated by power."<sup>41</sup>

Wendell Phillips: the Patrician as Agitator

Wendell Phillips had a "reasoned philosophy of agitation." To him, agitation consisted in talk--talk which produced a constant thorn in complacency and therefore necessary in a republican commonwealth to counteract "sloth and indifference."<sup>42</sup> Consequently, Mr. Hofstadter feels Phillips has been judged harshly and in the wrong terms by conventional historians.

Phillips is pictured as "the most impressive of the abolitionists" and "the only major figure who combined in one career the abolition ferment of the prewar period with the labor movement of the postwar industrial epoch."<sup>43</sup> Hofstadter challenges the reputation of Garrison not only as the leader of the total movement but as leader of the New England movement. Further, he may have done the movement more harm than

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-33.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

good. The Garrison school, calling for Northern secession, cut abolitionists off from political action, action that was used more effectively by non-Garrison abolitionists.

Phillips' beliefs changed rapidly, and finally he came to a realization that black labor could not be free until all labor was free. He attacked wage slavery accordingly. As an exponent of socialism in the Gilded Age, he stood alone.<sup>44</sup>

The Spoilsmen: An Age of Cynicism

The theme of this essay is given momentum by an examination of the captains of industry who, with all their corruption, waste, and vulgarity, needed no guilty conscience for they stood ". . . on the American mythology of opportunity for the common man."<sup>45</sup> An American public glorified them and Darwinism gave them the rationale. They were encouraged to believe that what they did was good, that they were beneficent providers of a great growing and progressing country. The wealth acquired by these men set standards of consumption, emulation and success which account in many ways for the change in politics. After the Civil War, the parties were divided on patronage, not on principles, and the Republican party was different from the Democratic party in that it was successful.<sup>46</sup> The American public had to sustain the idea that there was nothing wrong with Congressmen using their positions for personal material gain. The tenor of the times may be aptly described by Blaine's remark, 'When I want a thing, . . . I want it dreadfully.'<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 159-62.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp. 166-70.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

Grover Cleveland, elected by a "series of improbabilities," conceived of the Presidency as a negative instrument to police other politicians.<sup>48</sup> However, he believed in the laissez-faire philosophy of no government action and felt the government could do little with corruption. Mr. Hofstadter dismisses him with the statement that "out of heartfelt conviction he gave to the interests what many a lesser politician might have sold them for a price."<sup>49</sup>

William Jennings Bryan: the Democrat as Revivalist

William Jennings Bryan, "provincial politician following a provincial populace in provincial prejudices,"<sup>50</sup> is pictured by Mr. Hofstadter as "intellectually . . . a boy who never left home."<sup>51</sup> Although held up as a rebel, Bryan was never really a rebel at all, for he was intellectually limited, deeply lacking in detachment with no sense of alienation. He not only stood for the average man, he was that average man. Mr. Hofstadter says he "helped to lead a Great Awakening which swept away much of the cynicism and apathy that had been characteristic of American politics for thirty years" but "unfortunately Bryan's political leadership and social philosophy were as crude as the theology of his evangelical brethren."<sup>52</sup>

In 1896, with his eyes on the past, Bryan believed in the hands-off laissez-faire philosophy with its emphasis on the preservation of individualism. After 1896, searching for an issue, he made a "grotesque

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 186-87.

miscalculation" on the Philippine treaty affair.<sup>53</sup> From reviving free silver to government ownership of railroads, Bryan had no success although many of his ideas were later written into law. But then, according to Mr. Hofstadter, Bryan demanded not success but an audience and it was only when he finally lost the latter that he became bitter.<sup>54</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt: the Conservative as Progressive

Theodore Roosevelt, "master therapist of the middle class,"<sup>55</sup> gave to his countrymen living in fear of trusts, labor and depression, a "sense that the nation had not lost its capacity for growth and change."<sup>56</sup> The impulse behind Roosevelt's own political beliefs were essentially negative, based upon anxiety and fear. In that frantic changing society all Americans lived with anxieties and fears. Roosevelt's psychological function therefore was to relieve these anxieties by sudden bursts of hectic action and a constant scolding of the demons that aroused these anxieties.

First, what lay behind Roosevelt's actions? Conventional historians explain Roosevelt's personality in terms of a compensation for physical inferiority. Mr. Hofstadter's remarks indicate a somewhat different frame of mind.

Was he a great reformer? Hofstadter feels he was not. In the New York legislature, Roosevelt referred to the 'demagogic measures' which he opposed, measures representing relief to labor (minimum wages and

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 192-99.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 230.



hours).<sup>57</sup> As Governor, he learned to yield to labor in practical measures and developed flexibility in this area. On gaining the Presidency, Roosevelt pictured himself as a conservative, an arbiter, standing above the classes. His theme was to regulate business, not destroy it, and he felt himself to be a stabilizer of the status quo. His advisers were representatives of business, and his thinking often resembled that of the shrewder capitalists. He honestly was against the abuses of big business, but reform to him meant only taking care of the most noticeable ones. "The most intense and rapid growing of trusts in American business history took place during Roosevelt's administrations."<sup>58</sup> This advocate of conventional laissez-faire disliked and feared the mob, the rich, the muckrakers, signs of organized power among the people, the reformers like LaFollette, the radicalism of the socialist movement, and indiscriminate trust breaking.<sup>59</sup>

How then did Roosevelt so delude the people that he earned the reputation of a reformer and trustbreaker? How did he gain his widespread popularity? "His mind . . . did not usually cut very deep . . . . But he represented something that a great many Americans wanted."<sup>60</sup> His fierce nationalism and militarism had a certain distracting appeal. He made use of a great deal of verbal violence which made the people at least think he was supporting the reform movements. Actually some business elements did oppose him publicly and this fact coupled with a few cleverly chosen and well-placed trust prosecutions, added to the growing image.

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 212.      <sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 218-28.      <sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

Woodrow Wilson: the Conservative as Liberal

"The service rendered by the government must be of a more extended sort. . . . we do not mean to strike at any essential economic arrangement . . . . the real danger is the combination of combinations . . . . what we have got to do. . . is to disentangle this colossal community of interest . . . to pull apart, and gently, but firmly and persistently dissect."<sup>61</sup>

Such were the words of Woodrow Wilson, spokesman of the past, a man who by personality had to belong to a culture, to tradition, to institutions and who sponsored reform to sustain traditions of the past. Before becoming President, Wilson believed in a "temperate and honest pursuit of private good."<sup>62</sup> Although suspicious of trusts, he accepted the conventional laissez-faire philosophy and believed the government should play the role of an impartial mediating agent. His idea was not government interference but control of business by good laws enforced through the courts. His solution would be found in a movement of moral regeneration. Behind these beliefs lay a personality with a desire to become great in order to serve greatly, a demand for unmitigated righteousness, a powerful need for affection created by a deep sense of isolation and inability for personal communication, a sentimental traditionalist at heart, with Southern political roots and British intellectual traditions.<sup>63</sup>

In his campaign Wilson pointed to illicit competition, not free competition, as the "bad boy" and he concentrated his attack on Roosevelt and the trusts. There appears a parallel between Roosevelt and Wilson but in Mr. Hofstadter's words, the difference was like that

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 254.      <sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 241-50.

of "fervor and hysteria."<sup>64</sup> Wilson had a deliberate philosophy which encompassed the possibility for change and he was sincere to the depths. This can not be said for Roosevelt. Accordingly, "The first Wilson administration . . . produced more positive legislative achievements than any administration since the days of Alexander Hamilton."<sup>65</sup>

Essentially the New Freedom was an attempt of the middle class, with agrarian and labor support, to arrest the exploitation of the community, the concentration of wealth, and the growing control of politics by insiders, and to restore, as far as possible, competitive opportunities in business.<sup>66</sup>

The coming of World War I greatly changed the situation. Inherent in Wilson's neutrality were two contradictions--the United States must remain neutral and the allies must win. He urged all Americans to be impartial but found this impossible for himself. Forced finally to declare war, he had "to turn his back upon his deepest values," and "the rest of his public career became a quest for self-vindication."<sup>67</sup> At the peace conference his most important mistake was in his failure to grapple with the economic problems. His dream of an equal peace was not realized in the real peace arrangement between masters and slaves. "In the end the cause of liberal internationalism was defeated and Wilson himself was a living corpse."<sup>68</sup>

During his last years, Wilson moved like a sleepwalker and could have been considered a failure:

He appealed for neutrality in thought and deed, and launched upon a diplomatic policy that is classic for its partisanship. He said that American entrance into the war would be a world calamity, and

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 245.    <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 258.    <sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 260.    <sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>68</sup>Richard Hofstadter (ed.), Great Issues in American History, 1864-1957 (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), II, 183.

led the nation in. He said that only a peace between equals would last, and participated in the Diktat of Versailles. He said that the future security of the world depended on removing the economic causes of war, and did not attempt even to discuss these causes at the Peace Conference. He declared his belief in the future of government ownership, and allowed his administration to close in a riot of reaction. He wanted desperately to bring the United States into the League, and launched on a course of action that made American participation impossible.<sup>69</sup>

However, Mr. Hofstadter finds Wilson's record can be defended:

In the Fourteen Points he produced a more sane and liberal, if not enduring, basis for peace than anyone else among the belligerents. By appealing to the hopes of Germany he helped to bring an earlier armistice. Harsh as the treaty was, it would have been materially worse without his influence. He went to Europe handicapped by his apparent repudiation in the Congressional elections of 1918, limited by the national claims and secret treaties of his allies, tied to the technique of compromise by his hopes for the League, committed by his belief in capitalism and nationalism to accept the major consequences of the disaster they had wrought.<sup>70</sup>

In the end, Wilson lost his political judgment and went in search of martyrdom. The acceptance of the League Covenant became an obsession to him, for if lasting peace was not secured, he could never find justification for leading his country into war. However, Mr. Hofstadter feels if Wilson had not refused to accept a few minor compromises, the treaty would have been accepted by the Senate.

By refusing to accept the mildest reservations upon American membership, even those which merely reaffirmed provisions of the United States Constitution, he did as much to keep the United States out of the League as isolationists like Borah or partisans like Lodge.<sup>71</sup>

From Great Issues in American History, Volume II, a final comment is made: "Wilson's attempt to win the Senate's consent to membership in

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<sup>69</sup>Hofstadter, American Political Tradition, pp. 278-79.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 279.      <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

the League is one of the most poignant personal tragedies in the history of the American Presidency."<sup>72</sup>

Herbert Hoover and the Crisis of American Individualism

When World War I ended, Herbert Hoover emerged as the biggest man on both sides of the Atlantic, the man who had fed Europe. A decade later, he had become a symbol of hunger and disaster and left the White House in more disfavor than any President since John Quincy Adams. In Mr. Hofstadter's eyes, Hoover was the last presidential spokesman of laissez-faire liberalism and he failed because the world that had produced him and his ideas and philosophy had collapsed. He believed in this philosophy so strongly that he clung to it to the end.<sup>73</sup>

As President, Herbert Hoover was a failure in dealing with the politicians and the public and was hampered by personal limitations of shyness, sensitivity to criticism, addiction to worry. However, according to the author, Hoover's greatest handicap really lay in his philosophy of the unregulated profit system, for to him "unmanaged capitalism was an economic system without a major flaw."<sup>74</sup> Hoover was a product of the past, brought up in the era of the captains of industry with the view that "economic life is a race that is won by the ablest runner, . . . ." and he could prove this from personal experience.<sup>75</sup>

Hoover interpreted the depression as a temporary upset caused by forces abroad with the assumption that the American economy was basically

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<sup>72</sup>Hofstadter, Great Issues, II, 228.

<sup>73</sup>Hofstadter, American Political Tradition, pp. 285-86.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 313.      <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

sound. Mr. Hofstadter feels this interpretation was wrong and that Hoover failed to realize that the American forces of production had far outstripped the purchasing power. His remedies consisted of voluntarily maintaining wages and production. The less this worked the more Hoover seemed to think it did, and the more stubborn and defiant he became. One thing is mentioned to his credit--although historic government answer to depression was *lassiz-faire*, Hoover was the first president to use any federal leadership. But his leadership was useless without government compulsion over business, which was vital even to his little program. One of Hoover's miscalculations was in thinking agriculture was basically sound. Mr. Hofstadter says agriculture was not, for it had outgrown all its markets. In the area of relief, Hoover's mind was clouded by his loyalty to the old myth of self-help. He insisted that only voluntary agencies could carry out relief programs, for any government help would be demoralizing to the people.<sup>76</sup>

After World War II, in world and domestic affairs, Hoover still urged a return to the so-called conditions of the past--"free trade, free enterprise, competition, open markets, open opportunities," faith in the "planless world of the free market." He seriously believed that "free enterprise might be restored to the postwar world . . . . In all history no more historic setting-back of the clock had ever been proposed."<sup>77</sup>

Franklin D. Roosevelt: the Patrician as Opportunist

"No personality has ever expressed the American temper so articulately or with such exclusiveness." The New Deal age "was monopolized by one

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 299-307.      <sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

man, whose passing left American liberalism demoralized and all but hopeless."<sup>78</sup> Thus, the F. D. R. legend became a part of the American mythology Mr. Hofstadter is trying to correct.

The New Deal was not a philosophy but a temperament. F. D. R. was confident that he could do no wrong, and his manner of experiment, activity, trial and error was desperately desired by a people in the depths of a staggering depression. He lacked direction but was extremely flexible, with a sharp intuition for popular feeling. If a large number of the people wanted something, Roosevelt felt they should have some satisfaction.

At the beginning of his career Roosevelt brought with him the "patri-  
cian reform thought of the Progressive era," an age when the best cure to  
ills would be good laws administered by honest men.<sup>79</sup> As Governor,  
Roosevelt stood for "complete separation of business and government."<sup>80</sup>  
In the 1932 campaign, many indications gave proof that the New Deal had  
not yet taken form in his mind. He said the depression began at home,  
he denounced Hoover for spending too much money, viewed public works as  
only a stopgap measure for the relief of starving people. Roosevelt pro-  
posed no liberal program.<sup>81</sup>

The only unity in the New Deal program was in political strategy.  
The first New Deal, 1933-34, was conceived of as a recovery measure. In  
the beginning Roosevelt's attitude toward labor and unions was not cordial

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp. 315-29.

and he opposed them in the NRA. It was only later that he became intimately friendly with the left. By 1936, no real business recovery had occurred, Huey Long was gaining support, and labor was withdrawing support from the administration. So the second New Deal saw a "sharp and sudden turn toward the left."<sup>82</sup> It had not been planned--"it erupted."<sup>83</sup> But Roosevelt indicated no intention of destroying capitalism; he wished to restore its health. By 1938, the objectives of "distributive justice and sound, stable prosperity" had not been accomplished.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, Roosevelt returned to large scale government spending and the assault against monopoly. The latter is a complete reversal of Roosevelt's 1933 philosophy. The New Deal, according to Mr. Hofstadter, did relieve some degree of distress, enact permanent valuable measures, release great forces of mass discontent, revive liberalism and develop the idea that mass welfare is the responsibility of the entire nation working through the federal government. However, Roosevelt soon forgot that recovery under the New Deal had been incomplete and that the country was prospering because of wartime production.

Roosevelt's reputation, however, will remain greater than Wilson's and in good part because the circumstances of his martyrdom were auspicious. Wilson died only after his defeat was a matter of historical record: Roosevelt died in the midst of things, and it is still possible for those under his spell to believe that everything would have been different if only he had survived to set the world on the right path in the postwar period.<sup>85</sup>

An interesting finale to analysis of this book is to consider in light of the previous interpretations, some views expressed by Hofstadter

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 338.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 352.



in an article written in 1960, "Right Man for the Big Job." In this article Mr. Hofstadter gives his idea of the necessary qualifications for the office of President of the United States. The greatest emphasis is placed on the necessity of the President having been a professional politician of long standing. Hofstadter then rates as having outstanding success, the following professional politicians-- F. D. R., T. Roosevelt. and Lincoln.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Richard Hofstadter, "Right Man for the Big Job," New York Times Magazine, April 3, 1960, p. 122.

E. BOOK FIVE

The Age of Reform is an account of the passion and zeal for reform in America from 1890-1940 but with a new twist.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter is attempting to lay at rest once and for all the popular notions of the Golden Age of Reform. He treats this as a study of the psychology of reform groups and as such leans heavily upon the techniques and sometimes the vocabulary of social anthropology and social psychology, drawing attention to public moods, myths and nostalgia, psychic satisfactions, status problems, and group pressures.

As an urban-centered book, the strong agrarian bias is absent. But Mr. Hofstadter is not standing in absolute criticism. He is criticizing from within, attempting to reveal the limitations of the Populist and Progressive traditions and to free them from their sentimentalities. Perhaps, in this manner, the political misuses of these values and aspirations can be prevented in the future, perhaps the meaningful aspects can be discovered and retained and perhaps there can be a beginning of sound conservative thinking. His real criticism of the reform tradition is not that it is foolish and destructive, but that it is ambiguous, too often absolute so that it "wanders over the border between reality and impossibility."<sup>2</sup>

Ironies flourish in abundance. The very activities the reformers pursued in attempting to restore individualism brought them closer to

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<sup>1</sup>Hofstadter, Age of Reform.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

the techniques of the organization they feared.<sup>3</sup> To mention only one other point:

One of the most interesting and least studied aspects of American life has been the frequent recurrence of the demand for reforms, many of them aimed at the remedy of genuine ills, combined with strong moral convictions and with the choice of hatred as a kind of creed.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter desires his observations to be "taken as a prelude and a spur to further studies of American reform movements and not as an attempt to render a final judgment."<sup>5</sup> But he does render an obviously final judgment--that the net results of the Age of Reform are definitely positive and of exceptional value. But they must be understood in the light, thinking and moods within which they evolved.

In tackling what he refers to as the "Agrarian Myth," Mr. Hofstadter makes the comment, "The United States was born in the country and has moved to the city."<sup>6</sup> "The agrarian myth represents a kind of homage that Americans have paid to the fancied innocence of their origins."<sup>7</sup> Farming and rural life have been held as sacred, and much of the strain and anxiety of Populism resulted from the rapid decline of this rural America. The myth that Mr. Hofstadter is talking about originated as a literary idea conceived by the upper class in a society becoming more and more commercial, now looking back to the blessed past. It was a myth because the articulate people who wrote and talked about the farmers stressed values of self-sufficiency, non-commerciality, nonmonetary--values which

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 7.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 21.      <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 23.      <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

the farmer did not necessarily look upon in a positive fashion. In the 18th century this myth had a universal appeal among the intellectual class; by the early nineteenth century it had become a mass creed moving to the point where the farmers' well-being was a moral and religious concern, the central source of civic virtue with agriculture entitled to the special protection and concern of the government.<sup>8</sup>

Why did this myth develop? It can be traced back to the assumption that the Revolution was won by a small band of farmers, then to the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian appeals. The basic strategy of continental development of the great inland regions pointed to the guaranteed preponderance of the yeoman and therefore of Jeffersonian democracy. The more fictional this myth became, the more it was believed. The farmer accepted it as a result of his loss of rank in society--his loss of status and respect as the cities grew. "The notion of an innocent and victimized populace colors the whole history of agrarian controversy . . . ."<sup>9</sup>

To what extent was the myth false?

The triumph of commercial agriculture rendered obsolete the objective conditions that had given to the agrarian myth much of its original force, but also showed that the ideal implicit in the myth was contesting the ground with another even stronger idea--the notion of opportunity, of career, of the self-made man.<sup>10</sup>

The immense interior helped to destroy the yeoman spirit, for cheap land and rising land values made of the yeoman a land speculator and a frequent mover, developing an attachment to land values instead of land

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-28.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

and preventing the development of a distinctly rural culture in the United States. The agricultural life was imbued with the commercial spirit, mobile, mechanized, progressive with the tendency of the farmer to hope for higher standards of living, to buy expensive machinery, to go into debt thereby capitalizing on his greatest single asset--the unearned appreciation in the value of his land.<sup>11</sup>

The Turner thesis with its idea of the West producing American democracy, of Populism as the logical product of this spirit, of the exhaustion of free land, was deceptive. The three centers of Populism were in overwhelmingly rural areas dominated by a crop with a price that had deeply declined. The answer, then to the causes of the agrarian crisis of the 1890's is found in the international market. Nor was free land exhausted, for more land was taken up after 1890 in the United States and Canada than before. If the farmers were deterred from settling it was because the international depression made farming hazardous.<sup>12</sup>

Populism is pictured as the "first modern political movement of practical importance in the United States to insist that the federal government has some responsibility for the common weal; . . . first such movement to attack seriously the problems created by industrialism."<sup>13</sup> The basic themes of Populism included the ideas of restoring the conditions of the Golden Age of an agrarian Eden lost with the development of industrialism and commercial agriculture, and of a lush natural order

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 43-44.      <sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-53.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

whose workings had been deranged by human law. This was a dualistic philosophy of people against interests, or public versus plutocrats, or the toiling multitude against the money power. Victory over the money power came to represent the basic issue. Militancy, nationalism, fear of an impending apocalypse, fear of international money conspiracies, a high tendency to account for impersonal events in highly personal terms, hatred of big business and trusts, fear of immigrants and urban labor, and anti-Semitism were dominant tones in this movement. Much of this of course was a part of the fear and suspicion still haunting the American nativist mind which has distrusted and hated everything remote or alien.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Hofstadter makes a forceful statement concerning the anti-Semitism facet of Populism. "It is not too much to say that the Greenback-Populist traditions activated most of what we have of modern popular anti-Semitism in the United States," brought about by the identification of the Jew with the international gold ring.<sup>15</sup>

With the passing of Populism came the paradoxical idea of success through failure. Historians have referred to the defeat of populism but Mr. Hofstadter asks, "How can a movement whose program was in the long run so generally successful be identified with such a final and disastrous defeat for the class it was supposed to represent?"<sup>16</sup> It was a defeat for the "soft side" of the farmer's tradition, for the political movement based on the old phases of agrarian ideology, but it was a

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-85.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

success for commercial agriculture as an economic interest. In the twenty years after 1896, American agriculture experienced its greatest prosperity in peacetime prior to 1944 and its greatest legislative gains. Populism then was not a defeat but ". . . the first uncertain step in the development of effective agrarian organization."<sup>17</sup>

Too, the success of Populism as a third-party movement cannot be measured in terms of major party success. Major parties live for patronage rather than principle, work for a coalition of interests, and maintain a compromise between these interests, while third parties are a special interest with special programs. Thus, it is not the function of a third party to win and govern, but rather to agitate, educate, generate new ideas, create dynamic movements. In Mr. Hofstadter's words, "Like bees: once they have stung, they die."<sup>18</sup> "The People's Party seems to have fulfilled its third-party function. It transformed one of the major parties, had a sharp impact on the other, and in the not too long run saw most of its program become law."<sup>19</sup>

Again, the so-called final victory of industrialism over the farmer ushered in the golden age of agriculture. This prosperity was achieved because of, not in spite of, the rise of industry and cities, for here grew a new market and here, too, the city served as the safety valve for the rural population (contradiction of the Turner thesis).<sup>20</sup>

Strangely enough, the rise in agrarian strength seemed to be in direct proportion to its decrease in numbers. It was growing more cohesive,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 96.      <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-9.      <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

more vocal, with a new concern with marketing and distribution and cooperatives, and with a new program of decreasing and controlling the volume of farm products themselves. The result was,

to establish, as a goal of national policy, the principle of party--the concept that it is a legitimate end of governmental policy to guarantee to one interest in the country a price level for its products that would yield a purchasing power equal to what that class had had during its most prosperous period in modern times, the so-called "base period" of 1909-14.<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter defines Progressivism as, that broader impulse toward criticism and change that was everywhere so conspicuous after 1900, when the already forceful stream of agrarian discontent was enlarged and redirected by the growing enthusiasm of middle-class people for social and economic reform. . . . It was not nearly so much the movement of any social class . . . against a particular class or group as it was a rather widespread and remarkably good-natured effort of the greater part of society to achieve some not very clearly specified self-reformation.<sup>22</sup>

The general theme of Progressivism appears as follows:

The effort to restore a type of economic individualism and political democracy that was widely believed to have existed earlier in America and to have been destroyed by the great corporation and the corrupt machine; and with that restoration to bring back a kind of morality and civic purity that was also believed to have been lost.<sup>23</sup>

The greatest difference between the Populist and the Progressives, according to Mr. Hofstadter, is that the middle class not only joined the Progressive movement but took over its leadership and the resulting thought was more informed, more moderate, more complex, less rancorous, qualified by a sense of responsibility and often of guilt but without the original and daring force of Populism.

Now, why did the Progressive revolt take place in a period of general prosperity? The men who provided the leadership for this movement were

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.



not suffering from a shrinkage in means or from economic deprivations but were suffering as victims of a status upheaval and a shrinking in their power and influence. The masters of the corporation were bypassing the aristocrats and the middle class. The latter groups were less important and knew it.<sup>24</sup> Their central grievance against the plutocracy "was not that it despoiled them economically but that it overshadowed them, . . . the new plutocracy had set standards of such extravagance and such notoriety that everyone else felt humbled by comparison."<sup>25</sup> Thus, bitterness increased among a group not worse off than before but better off.

In the previous era the professional group had given unqualified support to the extreme conservative position but now these men deserted this position and gave moral and intellectual leadership to liberal dissent. The most important reason was their shared feelings of humiliation and common grievances against the plutocracy--the status revolution. The clergy, the professors, the lawyers, all stepped forward. Coupled with this "revolt" was the rising of the American consumer as a factor in American politics.<sup>26</sup>

The Progressive mind was a Protestant mind backed by moral tradition of personal responsibility. No relief for increased guilt feelings could be found within this religion. Consequently, an "enormous amount of self-accusation," and moral indignation directed inwardly could be observed.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-37.      <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 147-73.      <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

This Progressive, a prosperous, respectable conservative, wanted no great social revolution. Rather, he needed to feel that action was taking place, that the moral tone was being raised and that he was partly responsible for the improvement. The muckrakers played an important part in creating this feeling, for, to a great degree, "the work of the Progressive movement rested upon its journalism."<sup>28</sup> This journalism appealed to "mass sentiments of responsibility, indignation and guilt," rather than to desperate social needs.<sup>29</sup> These muckrakers fostered realism--"an intimate, anecdotal, behind-the-scenes history of their own times."<sup>30</sup> But this was not a final, unchangeable reality. Once exposed to the realistic negative facts of society, the citizens would pass good laws and elect good men and the evils would be no more. Thus, these Progressive leaders and writers provided a necessary and wholesome catharsis for the American people.<sup>31</sup>

One interesting point brought out is the absence of support and of channels of communication from the non-nativistic stock. The breakdown in the homogeneity of population coupled with the terrific growth of the cities produced a series of serious conflicts. The immigrant's political background was quite different from that of the native American. The immigrant's conception of government brought with it an expectation of being acted upon by the government instead of playing an active role as a political agent. He looked to politicians for concrete and personal gains, not for a realization of high ideals. Consequently, the immigrant

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 202-14.

was usually at odds with the progressive reform aspirations.<sup>32</sup>

The Progressive's reaction to big business and political machines seems understandable. A man growing up in a tradition of widespread participation of the individual citizen in political and economic affairs was not faced with a society of large aggregates from which the unorganized citizen was being shut out. Mr. Hofstadter goes as far as to say "the Progressive movement was the complaint of the unorganized against the consequences of organization."<sup>33</sup> Here were a group of men whose whole life had been formed around the experience of individual enterprise, of novelty and daring, of pioneering and innovation, and who faced the prospect of living in a nation of employees. Thus, with their master spokesman, Woodrow Wilson, they made "one brave attempt to recapture that bright past in which there had been a future."<sup>34</sup>

The average citizen, even though distrustful of authority, began to rely more and more on the government as a last source of control. At the bottom was a fear of power, and the greater the power, the greater the fear. Thus, the long range trend toward legislation arose first from the reaction of the individualistic public to big business and big machines; but the role of the state would be just that of the middle class--neutral. It was T. Roosevelt who appeared as the first public leader to realize this public need for the neutrality of a powerful state. On the question of trusts, however, the Progressives found themselves in a dilemma. Alarmed at the threat to competition and democracy, they also found

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

themselves respectful of order and prosperity, admirers of bigness, efficiency and success, worshippers of progress. Apparently, the idea most congenial to the public was to restore, maintain and regulate competition rather than regulate monopoly. The solutions found, though, were mostly ceremonial as is usually the case when the social problem is largely unsolvable and the feelings surrounding it are urgent. That the discussions about the trusts were so momentous and so profound and the results so marginal and incomplete suggests that the conservatives retained control at all times.<sup>35</sup>

The political machine has been mentioned as a source of agitation. The Progressives wanted to restore popular government as they believed it had existed at an earlier age, and central to their beliefs was the conception of the average man with the ability to intelligently and willingly govern. Political reforms backed by moral indignation succeeded to a great degree, but the moral indignation did not last, and many of the newly-created tools fell into disuse. The mistake they made was to overlook the need for better organizations to replace the machines. Today, the use of machines has declined, not because of a frontal assault but because of a lack of need. Society seems now to be moving closer and closer to a mass democracy but Mr. Hofstadter doubts that the Progressives would be at all satisfied with the results.<sup>36</sup>

The gains from the Progressive movement were many, not the least of these, the insistence that the power of law be brought to bear against

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 233-48.      <sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 261-71.

the suffering caused by industrial barbarianism. Too, this movement "heightened the level of human sympathy in the American political and economic system."<sup>37</sup>

"Periodically war has written the last scene to some drama begun by the popular side of the party struggle . . . . "and participation in World War I put an end to the Progressive movement.<sup>38</sup> The war was justified in Progressive words and on Progressive idealistic moral terms. The appeal made by Wilson placed American intervention on the loftiest of idealistic planes and urged the people again to take the personal responsibility as citizens in world affairs as they had taken in domestic affairs--to crusade for reform in the international area as they had at home. Mr. Hofstadter finds that Wilson thus was making impossible demands upon the American people, pushing idealism and responsibility to the breaking point. The sacrifice of war released the pent-up feelings of guilt and personal responsibility and the American public were convinced they had paid the price for their prosperity. Therefore, the repudiation of Wilson, the treaty, the war, the League was no accident for in effect it was a repudiation of the Progressive mood and rhetoric itself, a repudiation followed by widespread apathy, neglect, hedonism. Progressivism was founded on a mood and after the war, the reaction destroyed the mood, and to a great extent Progressivism disappeared. Without serious opposition the old style conservatives came back into power, and the intellectual retreated from the political sphere.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 272-85.

"When the crusading debauch was over, the country's chief inheritance from the Yankee-Protestant drive for morality and from the tensions of the war period was Prohibition."<sup>40</sup> This, too, was no accident but "a means by which the reforming energies of the country were transformed into a mere peevishness," a "momento of the strange power of crusades for absolute morality to intensify the evils they mean to destroy."<sup>41</sup> This was one of the leading clues to the reaction against the Progressive temper as were the Klu Klux Klan and anti-immigrant movements. "The ethnic conflict heightened by the fight over Prohibition became, during an age of prosperity, far more acute than any economic issue."<sup>42</sup> However, Franklin Roosevelt, in Mr. Hofstadter's eyes, was "the first major leader in the history of American reform to surmount the old dualism, so troublesome to the Progressives, between the political ethos of the urban machine and that of nativist Protestant American."<sup>43</sup>

Moving into the area of the New Deal now, the observation is made that although absolute discontinuities do not occur in history, the New Deal was a new departure, different from anything that had happened before in the United States, different primarily in that its central problem was unique and so were its ideas, spirit, techniques. In the first place, this episode was "the first in the history of reform movements when a leader of the reform party took the reins of a government confronted above all by the problems of a sick economy . . . ."for the whole reformist tradition was based on the existence of a healthy society."<sup>44</sup> Secondly,

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 289.    <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 292.    <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 301.    <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 304.

while the Progressives conceived of the role of the state as a neutral, the New Deal state was neutral only in that it gave favors to everyone. Further, the New Deal had no structure of planning or premeditation; it was a "chaos of experimentation."<sup>45</sup> A new fiscal role of the federal government and the presence of a new social-democratic tinge can be readily observed. The New Deal in complete opposition to the Progressive movement was almost free of the crusades against machines and trusts, concerning itself rather with leaving consumers vital purchasing powers by disciplining pricing policies. Anti-monopoly was no longer the theme of liberal reform, and economic life was no longer thought of as an expression of character but as a field in which certain results were to be expected. "The key words of Progressivism were terms like patriotism, citizen, democracy, law, character, conscience, soul, morals, service, duty, shame, disgrace, sin, and selfishness, . . ." while the key terms of New Dealism reveal a different vocabulary: "needs, organization, humanitarian, results, techniques, institution, realistic, discipline, morale, skill, expert, habits, practical, leadership. . ."<sup>46</sup>

Mr. Hodstadter comments, "The New Deal and the thinking it engendered represented the triumph of economic emergency and human needs over inherited notions and inhibitions, . . ." with emphasis not on moral reform~~ma~~-tion but on economic experimentation.<sup>47</sup> The strange aspect here is the reversal of the typical conservative and liberal reform roles. The reforming liberals usually appealed to moral sentiment, to injustice and

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 316.

indignation, while the appeal of the conservatives was normally to hard facts and practical realities. However, from the New Deal onward Mr. Hofstadter sees a complete change in roles.<sup>48</sup>

"At the core of the New Deal, then, was not a philosophy . . . but an attitude suitable for practical politicians, administrators, and technicians, but uncongenial to the moralism that the Progressive had for the most part shared with their opponents."<sup>49</sup> Noticeable too, was a rediscovery of hope in contrast to the Progressive emphasis on the growing ugliness under the American surface. The Americans found themselves thrown into forced contact with the rest of the world, seeing the nation mechanized, urbanized, internationalized and realizing perhaps that it was no longer in their power to recapture the past.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 325.



F. ARTICLES

Several themes not developed at length in Richard Hofstadter's books are highlighted in articles and essays written at different times during his career as an historical author. These additional ideas and interpretations of controversial topics in American history are presented in the following pages with the hope of rounding out a picture of the range and depth of the thinking of a current Pulitzer-Prize winner, and of giving additional insight into the interdisciplinary approaches used by him in order to better answer the questions posed at the beginning of this thesis.

Article I

In "Manifest Destiny and the Philippines,"<sup>50</sup> Richard Hofstadter attempts a new approach to the study of the causes of the Spanish-American War and the annexation of the Philippines.

Previously, historians have emphasized the economic approach (new markets and investments) or have pointed to the war as a newspapers' war, a war brought about by yellow journalism. Mr. Hofstadter finds both approaches inadequate and moves instead to finding an explanation in terms of social psychology, making then a preliminary sketch of a possible explanatory method. Keeping in mind views expressed in American Political Tradition, The Age of Reform, and Social Darwinism, the reader will see here a compact increased emphasis on psychology in an explanation of complicated historical events. The theme is fairly simple--the taking of

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<sup>50</sup> Richard Hofstadter, "Manifest Destiny and the Philippines," America in Crisis, ed. Daniel Aaron (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), pp. 173-200.

the Philippines Islands was considered a turning point in American history in the direction of expansion into distant areas, commitment in the Far East, and control of aliens by force. However, this annexation was a by-product of the war crisis which itself was a result of what Mr. Hofstadter terms the "psychic crisis of the 1890's."<sup>51</sup> Much of this psychic crisis can be traced from the great depression of 1892, a depression that was of unusual importance for its impact was heightened by the Populist movement, by the maturation and bureaucratization of industry and by the apparent end of the frontier. New tendencies and moods became evident--the tone of sympathy with the intensification of protest and humanitarian reform, and a tone of power with national self-assertion, expansion, aggression, the rising tide of jingoism. The course of the 1890's can be viewed as a history of public agitation over expansionist issues.<sup>52</sup>

Jingoism was fired by the incidents of the lynching of Italians in New Orleans, by the Valparaiso riot, and by the Venezuela boundary dispute. In all three of these incidents, national security was not vitally affected, American diplomacy was excessively aggressive, the possibility of war was contemplated, and the response of the American press and public was enthusiastically nationalistic. Mr. Hofstadter feels, too, that the politicians purposefully and consistently used jingoism to their own benefit for such purposes as restoring prestige, mending party fences and diverting the public mind from grave internal discontent. He finds

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 174-76.

McKinley pressured to give the people war rather than endanger the Republican position. Supposedly war was inevitable and therefore it would be much better for him to lead his country into war than be pushed, for resistance would ruin the party while support would prevent the Democrats from using free silver and free Cuba as campaign issues. The conclusion is drawn that the United States did not want freedom for Cuba (Spain had already acquiesced to demands) but rather war for the freedom for Cuba.<sup>53</sup>

The sensational press may have stirred the country into war but the real question concerns why the United States people were so receptive to war propaganda. This is explained in elementary psychological terminology. The capacity for sympathy and the need for power existed side by side. Through the process of displacement, aggressive and sympathetic feelings in domestic affairs found a safe discharge in foreign conflict. Thus, the current of sympathy for the war ran strongest where the discontent constituencies politically frustrated by Bryan's defeat were most numerous and the war served then as an idealistic and humanitarian outlet for intense increasing aggressive impulses, not primarily as a means for material gain.<sup>54</sup> Americans were frustrated, filled with anxieties over internal social conflict, depression, the prophesy of the stagnation of wealth and power. It is a psychological fact that frustrations can be relieved with acts of aggression, and anxieties allayed by threatening acts against others.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 177-80.      <sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-82.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

By the time the American people were given a chance to discuss and decide the question of the annexation of the Philippines, it was almost a fait accompli. America, under the strategy of Roosevelt, had been put beautifully on the defensive in the minds of the people. Dewey's marvelous attack and victory over the decrepit Spanish fleet, the dispatch of American troops to maintain the security of the fleet (Dewey could have just sailed away), the capture of Manila with the cooperation of the Spanish, the extension of the military government to the whole archipelago and the crushing of the resulting Filipino revolt, were arranged in such a manner as to place the United States in a defensive position and to make anything less than total annexation extremely difficult. The anti-imperialists were older men, a hopelessly heterogenous group, lacking the strength to capture control of a major party and faced with the position of opposing the fruits of a war they had supported.

The psychological approach finds two moral and psychological themes in the argument for annexation--duty and destiny--the idea of the duty to fulfill a solemn obligation and the idea of expansion as inevitable and irresistible. America consciously entered the war for humanitarian purposes. Territorial gains then created a problem of intense guilt feelings but the idea of duty relieved much of the feeling. Guilt feelings for wrong doings can be minimized by the successful execution of a project, for in Calvinistic terms, success actually is an outward sign of inward grace. Thus, the "remarkable" successes of the war could be taken as signs of Divine Approval, and the sin became transformed into a positive duty, a moral obligation. The idea of destiny convinced Americans that annexation might not be what they wanted to do but what they had to do, something

inevitable, against which no power could succeed. The duty had to be fulfilled and against this destiny, all were powerless.<sup>56</sup>

Article II

"Could a Protestant Have Beaten Hoover in 1928?"<sup>57</sup> The idea that Al Smith lost the Presidential election of 1928 because he was a Catholic is considered a myth by Richard Hofstadter. He feels that no Democrat could have won that year.

Smith's Catholicism, a grave liability in some areas, was a great asset in others. He made about as good a showing as could have been expected from any Democrat that year. Taken by itself, his religion proves nothing conclusively about the effect of Catholic adherence on a future Presidential candidacy.<sup>58</sup>

Why then did Al Smith lose? No party has been turned out of power except by a depression, war, or party split and the Democrats were faced with the golden glow of prosperity. Herbert Hoover was a man of immense prestige all over the world, the Democratic party was in shambles, the country in 1926 as indicated by the congressional elections was overwhelmingly Republican, the Democrats had no good issue.

The Democrats did not expect Smith to win but rather to hold the minimal Democratic areas, to extend Democratic influences and restore the party unity. By losing the Solid South, the first of these objectives was not attained, but Smith succeeded with the latter two very well. He restored the party's percent of the popular vote from 28.8 per cent to 40.8 per cent. He gained almost a million more votes for his party than Hoover did for his.

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 185-92.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Hofstadter, "Could a Protestant Have Beaten Hoover in 1928?" The Reporter, March 17, 1960, p. 31.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

"He lost a campaign that had to be lost, but in such a way as to restore his party as an effective opposition and to pave the way for the victories of F. D. R."<sup>59</sup>

Article III

In "U. B. Phillips and the Plantation System," Richard Hofstadter attacks directly U. B. Phillips and the plantation legend which he was so responsible in forming.<sup>60</sup> He makes three points in opposition to Phillips:

First: Phillips' data are inadequate and misleading as a sample of Southern slaveholding or slaveholders because of their almost exclusive emphasis on the plantation-sized unit; second, that they are not even a good sample of the plantation unit itself (under any reasonable definition of the plantation) because of the extent to which they draw for their most critical data upon atypical plantations of the largest size; and third, that we have no assurance that the data he used could have given an adequate account of slave management and slave conditions because the vast majority of slaves did not live on plantations of this order.<sup>61</sup>

He not only overlooked the bulk of the slaves living on small farms with less than ten slaves but he also overlooked several of the border states. Since he drew his conclusions about the old South on the basis of an analysis of plantations with more than 100 slaves, he was sampling about 10% of all the slaves and less than 1% of all the slaveholders.

Mr. Hofstadter finds Olmsted's interpretation more accurate than Phillips. Olmstead found the slaves in the smaller units better off, and the presence of cruelty inherent in the system. Phillips' views on the "sambo" character, on the absence of many slave riots, or the use of

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>60</sup>Hofstadter, "U. B. Phillips and the Plantation System," Journal of Negro History, XXIX (April, 1944), 109-24.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

planters' manuals as an accurate picture of slave rules and regulations actually in force, are responsible for part of the extremely erroneous picture painted of the South.<sup>62</sup>

However, unless modern scholars find new methods to study this subject, Phillips' views will not be done away with. Mr. Hofstadter issues a challenge:

Let the study of the Old South be undertaken by other scholars who have absorbed the viewpoint of modern cultural anthropology, who have a feeling for social psychology (a matter of particular importance in the study of regime in which status was so vital), who will concentrate upon the neglected rural elements that formed the great majority of the Southern population, who will not rule out the testimony of more critical observers, and who will realize that any history of slavery must be written in large part from the standpoint of the slave--and then the possibilities of the Old South and the slave system as a field of research and historical experience will loom larger than ever.<sup>63</sup>

#### Article IV

The article, "Turner and the Frontier Myth,"<sup>64</sup> contains an explanation of the Turner thesis, an analysis of the continuing affect it has had on American thought and a summary of the criticisms against it by historians--criticisms with which Hofstadter concurs. He admits that Turner, himself, was not doctrinaire. However, Turner's disciples accepted his thesis as the Bible, neglected to analyze it critically, and treated it as the last word rather than as a first step in the right direction. But, today, historians have brought to light the many grave distortions and defects contained therein.

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 119-24.      <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>64</sup>Hofstadter, "Turner and the Frontier Myth," The American Scholar, XVIII (1948-49), 433-43.

Any nation developing a large continental empire would be affected by a frontier but Turner treats this factor as the primary aspect which leaves him open to the criticism that the frontier was only one of the many factors influencing American development. "The central weakness of Turner's thesis was in its intellectual isolationism."<sup>65</sup> By concentrating on the uniqueness of a development, the similarities and parallels with other countries and other movements are overlooked. Too, contributing to this uniqueness found outside the frontier are overlooked factors such as the federal system, the slave system, immigration, corporate phase, etc.

If the frontier were the source of American democracy and individualism, other frontiers should have produced the same effects but, of course did not. "Turner's analysis, as George Warren Pierson aptly put it, hung too much on real estate, not enough on a state of mind." If democracy came from the West, it should be possible to trace "successive waves of democratic sentiment and practice from West to East."<sup>66</sup> However, this is not observable.

The upsurging of democracy in the 19th century--Jeffersonianism and Jacksonianism--make far more sense in the context of social classes partly because both movements found so much support in the East.

The safety valve aspect of Turner's is critically examined. In the first place, land was cheap, not free, and this semantic clarification makes a difference, for in a depression the amateur farmer or Eastern

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 437.      <sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 439.



laborer could not afford to move West. The safety valve idea is applicable only to rural discontent--the farmers could move on to new land in times of prosperity. Additionally and emphatically, the reverse of Turner's safety-valve idea is true. The city served as a safety valve for the West. Finally the broader view of the United States as the safety valve for Europe is overlooked and the suggestion is made that the real clue might be found in the closing of the doors to immigration rather than in the closing of the frontier.<sup>67</sup>

#### Article V

Mr. Hofstadter takes "William Leggett, Spokesman of Jacksonian Democracy,"<sup>68</sup> as a writer whose writings expressed the sentiments of a large number of the Jacksonian following. It is thus important to note here what Mr. Hofstadter feels were the feelings of this large segment and therefore the purpose behind a great deal of the agitation and proposals of the Jacksonian era. He finds that contrary to popular conceptions, this large segment was not revolting against wealth or big business or banks or competition or propertied rights. Rather they were agitating for a laissez-faire philosophy of equal opportunity for all, for the privilege of chartering banks and corporations, for securing property, etc.

During Leggett's time, the unpropertied masses were gaining political power and labor was organizing. The workingmen disliked being denied

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 439-43.

<sup>68</sup> Hofstadter, "William Leggett, Spokesman of Jacksonian Democracy," Political Science Quarterly, LVIII (March, 1943), 581-94.

the avenues to competition and new enterprise by the banks' credit policies, by the legislatures' corporation-chartering policies. They disliked being paid their wages in notes below par value. The answer seemed to be freedom of enterprise and elimination of government interference. Leggett's philosophy was based on equal rights in all areas, governmental laissez-faire, opposition to the banks not as holders of wealth but as privileged monopolies, the freedom and duty of labor to organize, free trade, etc.

The result of the agitation of men like Leggett was not to abolish private property but to democratize the economic life of the country and to develop the United States corporate institution.<sup>69</sup>

#### Articles VI and VII

Mr. Hofstadter's analysis of the framing of the Constitution and his interpretation of and attitude toward Beard are expressed in several different places. In an article, "Beard and the Constitution: The History of an Idea," he examines Beard and finds that most historians overlook the prevailing pressures and influences of the time in which Beard wrote as instrumental in shaping Beard's ideas, methods, approach and conclusions.<sup>70</sup> In this essay, he is not interested in writing another critique on Beard but rather, he wishes to place

the ideas of the volume in their historical context; in calling attention to some of its neglected methodological implications; in discussing a significant ambiguity in its thought; and finally,

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., pp. 582-94.

<sup>70</sup>Hofstadter, "Beard and the Constitution: The History of an Idea," American Quarterly, II (Fall, 1950), 195-213.

in tracing the story of Beard's later attitude toward the Constitution as a symptomatic fragment of American intellectual history in the last three decades.<sup>71</sup>

Hofstadter traces the sources of Beard's economic interpretation and emphasis on class conflict far back into American history, to the Populist movement, to the development of the Turner school, to the social thought of the Progressive era, to changes in the social sciences and the desire to break down the barriers between the disciplines, so that by 1913, the time was ripe for a new interpretation of the Constitution. "What was still needed was a student of politics and history possessing a bold and free mind, capable of applying systematically the insights of current critical thought, who could turn up fresh data and combine them with a general history of the constitutional period."<sup>72</sup>

Beard's methodology is referred to as a "triumph of systematic intelligence."<sup>73</sup> The thought is expressed that American historical writing today would be much further ahead if historians had learned to use Beard's advance techniques.

However, an undercurrent of ambiguity is found throughout Beard's writings. "Was he saying that the Fathers framed the Constitution because they expected to profit by it? Or was he merely saying that the ways in which the Fathers made their profits predisposed them to look at political and constitutional issues from a certain perspective?"<sup>74</sup> Mr. Hofstadter finds that either proposition can be adequately argued from Beard's text, and he then moves on to assert that this ambiguity was built

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

into the structure of the research done by Beard. Interests rather than ideas dominated Beard's writings and thus, there was a real ambiguity in thought and a dualism in Beard's position.

Very simply, today the fact is overlooked that Beard lived and wrote in the progressive and muckraker era, that he was very much an exponent of popular causes, that with the others he saw selfish interests making use of the government of his day to serve private interests with the net result of undermining democracy. The journalists of that day were intent on exposure, concerned more with examining and destroying the declining ideas of an earlier age than in evaluating their own, preoccupied with a search for reality—a reality that was rough, sordid, hidden, neglected, the "inside story." Is it any wonder then that Beard, a product of this era, turned to an examination of the Constitution in terms of this era, and is it any wonder that his interpretation fitted so beautifully into the context of the 20th century? Seen in this manner, Mr. Hofstadter presents the Beardian thesis as a very natural product of the age in which it was written.

Then, too, as the age changed, as public opinion changed, so did Beard's ideas. After World War I and especially after World War II, America began to look quite good to the Americans; constitutional government alongside of Nazi tyranny seemed like a gift from heaven; and America re-embraced America. Naturally, Beard, too, became less disillusioned, more positive, and more interested in outlining the means by which constitutionalism could be preserved than in emphasizing a previous class struggle

from which he had claimed the Constitution developed.<sup>75</sup>

Beard's interpretation of the Constitution semantically changed-- ideas and events are treated in a different light, sharp clashes are overlooked, crass motives are omitted. The Constitution appears now not only as a "victory of conservative republicanism over democracy but also of republicanism military dictatorship."<sup>76</sup>

However, in his review of Robert E. Brown's Charles Beard and the Constitution, Mr. Hofstadter brings up some other points concerning the Beardian thesis.<sup>77</sup>

He distinguishes between the older scholars like Beard and their conflict-school approach and the newer historians and their argument structured socially on a middle-class basis.

Hofstadter feels Brown raises several important structural questions. Beard's description of a head-long conflict between the Constitutional framers and the state legislatures contains contradictions when it is seen that these legislatures appointed the framers. The ratification controversies were examined by Beard in a geographical reading from North to South rather than in chronological order which gives the erroneous impression that it was a very close hard-fought contest. In another instance, Beard refers to Pennsylvania's ratification as successful because of undue haste but refers to the Maryland and South Carolina ratifications as successful because of undue delay. Beard's interpretation of a large number disfranchised by the interests, overlooks the importance of the

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., pp. 208-17.      <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>77</sup>Hofstadter, "Reading the Constitution Anew," Commentary, XXII (September, 1956), 270-73.

difference between disfranchisement by property qualifications or by apathy. Brown concludes that the Constitution was adopted in face of widespread indifference.

Mr. Hofstadter suggests an alternative to both Beard's and Brown's interpretations:

that "the people" in 18th-century were not vitally interested in politics, especially in inter-colonial politics; that their characteristic (though not invariable) political attitude was one of indifference, and that this indifference often extended to issues which the historian now considers profoundly important; that in the absence of an alert and militantly self-interested political public, the functions of government and decision commonly went, very largely by default, to the gentry; that the gentry, far from presenting a united front to the people, were on occasion sharply divided among themselves on political matters, and that at times some of them chose to employ a rhetoric rather more democratic than were their actual convictions in order to win public support; that this was frequently the case in the struggle over the Constitution (though the representative political opinions of anti-Federalists were hardly more democratic than those of Federalists); that the Constitution was adopted amid wide public indifference, as Brown asserts; and finally that the most decisive popular challenges to government by the gentry were not delivered until the second and third decades of the 19th century, when "the people" began to make far more use of the franchise which had long been available to them, and when the demand that politics as a career be made open to talents became widespread. This view is consistent with the broad franchise and the political apathy which Mr. Brown points to, but pays due regard to sociological factors in the assessment of democracy.<sup>78</sup>

#### Article VIII

In a lecture given at Barnard College and published in the Winter, 1954-55 issue of The American Scholar, Mr. Hofstadter discusses, The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt.<sup>79</sup> He reemphasizes a point made earlier in The Age of Reform in reference to the absence of a dynamic liberal dissent

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 273.

<sup>79</sup>Hofstadter, "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt," The American Scholar Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (1954), 9-27.

in American political life. However, a dynamic in dissent, although not as powerful as the tradition liberal dissent, is evident today and "is powerful enough to set the tone of our political life and to establish throughout the country a kind of punitive reaction."<sup>80</sup> Hofstadter terms this dissent, the "pseudo-conservative revolt." It is conservative because its exponents refer to themselves as such and employ the traditional approach and speech of a conservative, but pseudo because evident in this revolt is a deep dissatisfaction with present institutions, traditions, and the American way of life, and an expression of a deep hatred of the United States society."<sup>81</sup>

Mr. Hofstadter discusses some of the neglected social-psychological elements in pseudo-conservatism and suggests a speculative hypothesis-- "that pseudo-conservatism is in good part a product of the rootlessness and heterogeneity of American life, and above all, of its peculiar scramble for status and its peculiar search for secure identity."<sup>82</sup> In explaining this hypothesis, a discussion of status and status expectations results in the following statement:

Not the least of them [drawbacks of social and occupational mobility] is that this has become a country in which so many people do not know who they are or what they are or what they belong to or what belongs to them. It is a country of people whose status expectations have been whipped up to a high pitch by our democratic ethos and our rags-to-riches mythology.<sup>83</sup>

Status politics defined as "the clash of various projective rationalizations arising from status aspirations and other personal motives"

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

are particularly prominent in times of prosperity and are "expressed more in vindictiveness, in sour memories, in the search for scapegoats, than in realistic proposals for positive action."<sup>84</sup> These intense status concerns are shared by two rather different opposing types--the Anglo-Saxon-Protestants and German-Irish-Catholic immigrant families. One of the most important status problems is that of nationality--a large proportion of a population with "foreign" backgrounds continually looking for concrete means to assure themselves that they really are Americans. Coupled with the raise in the standard of living has been a raise in the standard of hating--moving from anti-Semitism to anti-intellectualism.

The pseudo-conservative dissent has intensified because of several factors--the inability to satisfy status aspirations as fully as in previous days, the growth of mass communication, the feeling of powerlessness and victimization, the promise in the future of continued crisis. Mr. Hofstadter does not find this dissent overwhelming or totally dangerous but he does issue a warning that without a responsible elite, the rational pursuit of our goals and well-being could become impossible.<sup>85</sup>

#### Article IX

Richard Hofstadter's latest article appeared in the Summer 1962 issue of Daedalus, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.<sup>86</sup> Entitled "The Child and the World," it is mentioned here to complete the picture of the range of subject matter and the breadth of thinking of this author. This article is an inquiry into the intellectual and social

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 19.      <sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>86</sup>Hofstadter, "The Child and the World," Daedalus, XCI (Summer, 1962), 501-25.



roots of John Dewey's educational philosophy. Hofstadter presents Dewey's theories, carefully points out the weaknesses and deficiencies in them, and finally shows how different interpretations of these theories have set patterns for education during this century. This does not mean that Dewey would like what he would see today nor does it mean that he intended to have his ideas developed in this manner, but it does mean that the incompleteness of some of his ideas, the weaknesses in some of his thinking paved the way for many of the inconsistencies and defects in the present education system.

The romantic, post-Darwinian naturalistic background may explain the view of education gaining acceptance at the turn of the century--the view of the wonderful little child to be saved by education but by an education based on the developing needs and interests of the child rather than on the demands of society. The central idea of the new educational thought then meant "that the child himself naturally and spontaneously generates the needs and impulses that should animate the educational process."<sup>87</sup> Hofstadter feels that the United States with its tendency toward child indulgence provided an especially fertile soil for the redemption of civilization through the saving of the country's children in the manner mentioned above. The child as the key to the future according to Dewey must be freed from the oppressions of the world, from the restrictions and dictates of society, and thus freed he can use the resources within himself "to liberate the world from the weight of its past."<sup>88</sup> Hofstadter

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 507.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 524.

finds the following result:

Having once placed the child so firmly at the center, having defined education as growth without end, Dewey had so weighted the discussion of educational goals that a quarter-century of clarifying statements could not check the anti-intellectual perversions of his theory.<sup>89</sup>

Freud and Dewey saw the process by which an individual is socialized as a process making an imposition on youth. However, Freud viewed this as tragically inevitable while Dewey saw remedy through the educational process. Hofstadter finds after a generation of progressive educational experiment that Freud's view is confirmed!

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### STANLEY M. ELKINS

Stanley Elkins approaches his work in a different manner than Richard Hofstadter. His scope is narrower, he concentrates on only a few historical problems while Hofstadter in his years of historical research as seen in the previous pages has attempted to offer solutions to problems running the whole range of American history. Mr. Elkins is concerned with developing a new approach to the study of history and he uses primarily the slavery problem to show how this approach might be used in an elementary fashion. Combining anthropology, sociology, and behaviorism, Elkins sheds a different light from an institutional viewpoint on some old areas of disagreement.

#### A. BOOK ONE

In his only published book to date, Slavery, A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life, Stanley Elkins is self-admittedly inspired by Hofstadter.<sup>1</sup>

He quotes the challenge Mr. Hofstadter issued to scholars in his essay on U. B. Phillips, actually saying that this is what he (Elkins) is trying to do:

"Let the study of the Old South be undertaken by other scholars who have absorbed the viewpoint of modern cultural anthropology,

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<sup>1</sup>Elkins, Slavery.

who have a feeling for social psychology . . . , who will concentrate upon the neglected rural elements that formed the great majority of the Southern population, who will not rule out the testimony of more critical observers, and who will realize that any history of slavery must be written in large part from the standpoint of the slave--and then the possibilities of the Old South as a field of research and historical experience will look larger than ever."<sup>2</sup>

The categories for the discussion of slavery have always, in the past, dwelt in the realm of moral absolutes--right and wrong. The debate from the beginning to the present time continues to be the same, with the tests, the research, the conclusions following the same line of reasoning. Professor Elkins gives a short historical summary of the arguments, writing, and research in the field of slavery, indicating when each was popular and why. U. B. Phillips, showing the institution of slavery through Southern eyes for the first time in half a century, brought about a profound change in the feeling about slavery. To the debate on slavery, Phillips contributed knowledgeable and vigorous opposition to the northern view, the basic assumption of inherited racial inferiority, a sympathetic account which neutralized the past assumptions, and a raised level of scholarly research. Interestingly, Elkins urges that Phillips' writings and his popularity and acceptance be considered in light of the times in which he wrote--the Progressive Age. Progressivism in the South made civic and racial purity synonymous. With their emphasis on racial inferiority, Phillips' scholarly ideas rapidly caught hold and were accepted in the North and the South. Southern historical scholarship with this scholarly and moral impetus could then develop as a school. Keeping in

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

mind Hofstadter's interpretations of American thought and the development of an outward impulse toward equality and against racial bigotry, the observation can be made that Elkins too uses these ideas in explaining the change in temper in the slavery debate. The American mood began to demand a different conclusion than the one based upon racial inferiority, and these demands can be seen in the turn the debate took in the late 30's and 40's. Again, this was not a new interpretation but a reversal in the moral tone of the argument. Elkins considers Hofstadter's ideas in his essay on U. B. Phillips as the first real challenge for a new approach, and a hint as to what scholarly means might be used to put Phillips to bed once and for all. Elkins finds that Phillips has been discredited, his moral position reversed, and his scholarship superseded by scholarship more painstaking still. In order to do this, historians like Stamp had to join the old debate and hold to an approach dictated by that of Phillips.<sup>3</sup>

Elkins finds scholars today looking at only two alternatives--stop studying slavery or examine the old arguments and add or subtract from them. Nevin's in Ordeal of the Union in essence says, "Let there be peace." Elkins feels this view might be valid if it were not for the fact that this means overlooking the possibility of a completely new interpretation. Instead of being coerced by past thought, he intends to use this thought to formulate new questions and perhaps to suggest answers.<sup>4</sup>

The anti-slavery movement in the United States was markedly different from anti-slavery movements in other countries because of its emphasis on

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-21.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

moral purity. For abolitionists the question was all moral, always in the abstract, a problem of conscience. It was not approached as a problem in institutional arrangements primarily because the power of American institutions had diminished. According to Elkins, there really were no institutions in the traditional sense. The very success of the society in which the Americans lived, its energy, resources, its dynamic non-church religion, its boundless financial opportunity, made institutions unnecessary. The real symbol of vitality was the individual.<sup>5</sup>

By the 1830's slavery became a problem for Christendom, a question of sin. When sin became apparent, it brought with it a crushing feeling of unrelieved personal guilt. No traditional church with traditional outlets for personal guilt existed, and the self-made man, expected to stand on his own two feet, became transformed into a bloody avenger. Neither side, the Northerner referring to slavery as a crime against humanity or the Southerner and his reference to slavery as a moral good, could think or discuss slavery as a social institution.<sup>6</sup>

Because there was nothing natural about Negro slavery, because slavery had no common-law precedent, because the system created in America was unique in symmetry and percision of outline, Professor Elkins asks the question, "Why should the status of 'slave' have been elaborated, in little more than two generations following its initial definition, with such utter logic and completeness to make American slavery unique among all such systems known to civilization?"<sup>7</sup> The answer in this context

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-34.      <sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 35-37.      <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

lies in the course of unopposed capitalism which developed in the United States. The tremendous and rapid growth of the United States weakened its institutional development and therefore North America provided no institutional framework in which slavery was confined and through which it might be modified. Under this capitalism, it was the capitalist planter with large holdings and a large labor force who could enter into this large-scale movement. The Negro slave took precedence over the white servant for his labor was permanent, it could be trained over a long period, it grew in time. To earn a profit, efficiency became of prime importance and this meant the necessity of a well-trained, long working, unquestionably obedient labor force. Absolute power over the slave's body, a labor force entirely under the planter's power, was vital for efficiency and profitability in this unmitigated capitalism. Because there were no opposing institutions to draw lines, exert pressure and influence, law developed to sustain the planter in his continued and expanded treatment of the slave as a commodity with no legal concern for his personal life or soul.<sup>8</sup> As a result,

. . . the slave, utterly powerless, would at every critical point see his interests further depressed. At those very points the drive of the law--unembarrassed by the perplexities of competing interests--was to clarify beyond all question, to rationalize, to simplify, and to make more logical and symmetrical the slave's status in society. So little impeded was this pressure to define and clarify that all the major categories in law which bore upon such status were very early established with great thoroughness and completeness.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

Professor Elkins classes the four major legal categories which defined the status of the American slave as "term of servitude, marriage and the family, police and disciplinary powers over the slave, and property and other civil rights."<sup>10</sup> In examining the legal codes, the slave is found to be property. He was a slave for life and this status was inherited by his children. Any institutional arrangements of marriage and family had long since been destroyed. Any restrictions on the separate sale of slaves would have reflected on the plantation profits. The children derived their condition from their mother and therefore removed the problem of mulatto children born of white planters and of the creation of a free mulatto class. Perhaps U. B. Phillips' interpretation on the just regime tempered by paternal indulgence is justified but this is not as important as the fact that the discipline of the slave was legally under the master's dominion instead of in the law courts. Slaves had no legal rights. They had no civil privileges of education or worship, who educated slaves and emotionally-stirred slaves would create a problem with insurrections and rebellions. This precise system produced precise logic in the Southerner's mind. "All slaves are black; slaves are degraded and contemptible and should be kept in a state of slavery."<sup>11</sup> The slave was degraded and therefore contemptible with no conception of a non-slave colored class possible. Thus, "in the slave system of the United States--so finely circumscribed and so cleanly self-contained--virtually all avenues of recourse for the slave,

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 61.



all lines of communication to society at large, originated and ended with the master."<sup>12</sup>

In the Latin-American colonies of Spain and Portugal, the difference in systems is obvious. Here, the heavy hands of the monarchy and the church exerted a powerful influence. In no place did unmitigated capitalism develop. The colonies felt the rigorous supervision of these institutions. Both institutions in all ambiguity declared slavery to violate the divine equality of man, but both recognized and sanctioned it. How did these two opposing principles work together in equilibrium? Royal paternalism with concern for the slave meant the retention of a large measure of royal control. The church maintaining a dominant role in the formulation of the policies bearing on the morality of the slave system, condemned slavery with one hand and with the other insisted on and provided for morals, the soul, and the human rights of the slave.<sup>13</sup>

Examining this slave system in terms of the same categories used in the examination of the North American system, Elkins finds glaring differences. If the status of a colored person was in doubt, he was considered free. His servitude could be brought to an end by various means and the most important of those provided that he could buy his freedom. This was not merely a legal right but a realistic possibility, for a slave could own property, could hire himself out to others, sell his garden produce, etc. The Church kept slave unions under the holy sacraments, a slave could marry a free person and the masters had to bring their slaves to

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 63.      <sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-71.

church and teach them religion. The master never enjoyed powers of life and death over the slave's body. Priests answerable to no one regularly inspected the plantations and reported excessive cruelty and violations to the authorities. Finally the slave was not a mere piece of property, he was a man with a soul. If there was cruelty, it was in a man to man relationship. Color was no grave disability in itself and free Negroes could attain a high place in free society.<sup>14</sup> "All such rights and opportunities existed before the abolition of slavery; and thus we may note it as no paradox that emancipation, when it finally did take place, was brought about in all these Latin-American countries 'without violence, without bloodshed, and without civil war.'<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the major key to the contrasts between the North American and Latin American system is an institutional one. In Latin America the tensions between the church, crown and plantation forced an equilibrium and the result was an open system with the slave as a moral being whose contact with and the absorption into free society did occur. The opposite was true in the North American system for it was unchecked by institutional arrangements and supported the definition of the slave as chattel resulting in a closed system with the absence of the contacts with free society.<sup>16</sup> Now, did existing in a closed system shape the slave's character into a distinct personality, a personality different from all others? In other words, can the "Sambo" character be dealt with as a distinct type? Professor Elkins feels it can. It has been

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 74-92.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

proved that the evolution of the slave's personality was not a product of race nor simply a product of slavery as such, and if this Sambo is unique, found only in North American slavery, then it follows that he was a product of the peculiar system in which he lived, and an examination of the effects of any closed system on personality will have some validity.

Professor Elkins' thesis is based on the assumption that "Sambo" did exist as a plantation type and that the special sanctions of this closed system of slavery did in effect produce a definite, different, personality type. To prove this, the author draws first upon social psychology and the theory that "social behavior is regulated in some general way by adjustment to symbols of authority . . . and that such adjustment is closely related to the very formation of personality."<sup>17</sup> Secondly an analogy is made from the data on German concentration camps. In the latter case, masses of people were detached violently and quickly from their immediate environment and forced into a completely different one. This mass of adults actually experienced deep changes in personality and learned quickly a vastly new adjustment to a type of authority hitherto unknown. This process of detachment, shock, and adjusting to a new authority was experienced by mass groups of Negroes who, too, found it necessary to adjust to absolute power in a closed system with a resulting infantilization and a detachment also leaving little trace of prior cultural sanctions of behavior. Thus, if civilized white people from a

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

complex background can make this abrupt and semi-complete change in a relatively short time, it is not entirely unrealistic to suggest that such a change could have been made by the uncomplicated black savage. So reasons Professor Elkins.<sup>18</sup>

Several theories are available to explain the widespread existence of the "Sambo" type on the North American plantation. Elkins immediately throws out the theory of race or inborn nature. The African culture argument (the idea that this culture produced a "Sambo" type) is challenged. Anthropological studies are cited in an attempt to prove that today with new knowledge and study, a radically different view of this culture has developed--energetic, complex, teeming with vitality, resourcefulness and organization. The typical tribesman emerges as a warlike individual raised in an agricultural environment accustomed to hard work, a deep sense of family, living by a highly formalized set of rules often with experience in a political and military leadership. Something overwhelming then had to occur in order to make of this man the helpless dependent creature of the "Sambo" personality.<sup>19</sup>

The chain of events causing the changed personality is referred to as shock and detachment. The Negro slave met first the shock of capture, then the nightmarish shock of the march to sea with its attending physical torments, then the sale to slavers, followed by the gruesome shock of the "dread Middle Passage," and finally the sale as a slave.<sup>20</sup> The one man in three who lived through this chain of events emerged with much of

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-98.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

his past annihilated, prior connections severed, with old values and sanctions and standards becoming unreal and having no meaning. To furnish him with new standards, values, cues, he could now look only to his new masters, for on them everything, even his very being, depended.

The story must stop here for a moment. The Latin American slave also experiences this shock without becoming a "Sambo." Something more must have been added in the North American system to make this character complete. Elkins makes the process of detachment complete by showing what happens when a human being after a series of shocks is introduced into a closed authority system. Here then, comes the analogy with the adjustment to absolute power in the concentration camp.<sup>21</sup>

The author realizes an exact comparison cannot be made, but he feels free to

    speak of the concentration camp as a special and highly perverted instance of human slavery . . . . The concentration camp was not only a perverted slave system; it was also--what is less obvious but even more to the point--a perverted patriarchy.<sup>22</sup>

Briefly, the concentration camp was expressly devised to function as an instrument of terror with the basic technique of "the deliberate infliction of various forms of torture upon the incoming prisoners in such a way as to break their resistance and make way for their degradation as individuals."<sup>23</sup> Isolation, secrecy, diabolical elements, arrest in the night, planned brutalities during transportation to camps, indignities, chronic hunger, savage punishment, the obliteration of a private existence as an

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-102.      <sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

individual, the prospect of a limitless future, the omnipresent threat of death and so forth give indication of the shock treatment. However the adjustment of the survivors must be taken into account. The prisoner developed a split personality--these brutalities were not actually happening to him. He developed a new set of standards, he remained alive through apathy and inconspicuous behavior. Observers report their first impression of an extremely childlike quality with all of its attending vicissitudes. In addition, the SS man became a father-symbol and most prisoners identified to an amazing extent with the SS, with a resulting grotesque patriarchy. The success of the system can be judged by three tests: prisoners going to their death rarely attempted resistance, the suicide rate was very low, and there was an absence of hatred toward the SS.<sup>24</sup>

It would be impossible here to discuss fully the three theories of personality that Elkins feels may have some bearing on this "Sambo" character. It will have to be sufficient to mention that he summarizes very briefly the leading ideas of the Freudian school, quoting such authorities as Cohen, Brill, Freud himself, Anna Freud, and Leon Alexander, using such terms as "infantile regression" and "identification."<sup>25</sup> The interpersonal theory developed by Harry Sullivan, however, with its emphasis on the influences of others, the "significant others," is given more weight and is substantiated by theories from George Mead, David Riesman, Patrick Mullahy.<sup>26</sup> The third framework, considered most valid, is that of

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 109-15.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

psychology which "shifts the focus of attention to the individual's cultural and institutional environment rather than upon his 'self'"<sup>27</sup>

Elkins points to the more benevolent North American slavery system as a system where the individual, for psychic security, had to picture his master as the good father. The Negro child, with no legal father, would be even more apt to see in his master the father image. If, in two to three years, the concentration camp could produce the image of the child dependent on his SS father, how more believable it becomes that the slave in his closed system of many years could assume this similar relationship and attitude with, and toward, his master. Southern literature speaks fondly of the Negro but actually of the Negro as forever a child--helpless, dependent, a happy child.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, the Latin American slave did not become a Sambo because although he was subject to the same shocks as the North American slave, the role he played was different. In fact it was possible for him to play many roles, he could choose alternative roles, he might choose among several role images, he had a certain range of aspirations not the least of these the hope for freedom. He could even be a rebel!<sup>29</sup>

Turning to the place of the intellectuals in the anti-slavery movement, Professor Elkins examines the intellectual community of the SS from the 1830's, observing that it "consisted of men with no concrete commitment to the system at all. They were men who had no close commitment to any of society's institutions. They were truly men without responsibility."<sup>30</sup> The texture of a man's thought is supposedly affected by the lack

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 129-32.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

of institutions for this lack "removes the thinker not only from the places where power resides but also from the very idea of power and how it is used."<sup>31</sup> The Transcendentalists attacked all institutions and stood aloof from them.

Guilt has always played an abnormal role in reform movements in the United States, not because grave social ills existed but because there was no formalized, institutional outlet for this guilt, no channels for the dissipation of feelings of sin and passion and radicalism. Without these institutions, the intellectual found his effect measured by audience appeal. Nothing concrete was really expected of him. Thus his reform thinking was "erratic, emotional, compulsive and abstract."<sup>32</sup> Having no outlet for this massive guilt feeling, the individual could only cry, "Destroy the evil, do away entirely with the source of sin."

The Transcendentalist thinking is studied primarily because this absolute, moral approach was duplicated by the abolitionists. As the anti-slavery movement became more and more democratized and involved more people, the more anti-institutional it became. "That direction was from complexity of doctrine to simplicity, from organization to fragmentation from consolidated effort to effort dispersed, diffuse, and pervasive."<sup>33</sup> In order to attain results, then, the abolitionists found it necessary to appeal to the lowest common denominator--the moral right or wrong of slavery.

As in all tragedies, choices or alternatives, however narrowly conceived did exist. A series of short-term reforms would have been

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 184.



necessary if bloodshed were to be avoided. If a series of contacts for the Negro with free society could have been made, many of the difficulties of general emancipation could have been avoided in advance. Such proposals were made but in the American setting there was no way for them to be received or, more important, to be transformed into something other than mere proposals. The English abolitionist intellectuals were deeply involved in the institutions of their society and thought it respectable to be closely linked to sources of power. Their abolitionism found expression through institutional means; they understood compromise, knew necessity, and made headway, but in America the Concord intellectuals succeeded only in generating an enormous guilt within both their own minds and the mind of society at large. Instead of being gradually transformed through a series of institutionally implemented steps, each facilitating the next, slavery in America awaited a single cataclysmic explosion.<sup>34</sup>

It is appropriate here to take note of David Donald's blasting criticism of Professor Elkin's work, for in his appendix Elkins makes a strenuous attempt to defend his book on the basis of this criticism. Professor Donald will appear again later as Professor Benson's most scathing critic. In speaking of Professor Elkins, Donald says, "His argument suffers from having a dubious unstated major premise--that the Southern Negro was indeed a Sambo, something that Elkins assumes but nowhere even attempts to prove. Some time ago Elkins presented this portion of his study before a seminar at the Newberry Library, where a group of experts

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 195-97.

were devastatingly critical of his theory. He has concluded that the experts, rather than profiting by this criticism, suffered from a lack of familiarity with the use of this 'kind of extended metaphor' and has clung firmly to his analogy, despite its poor taste and worse logic . . . .

"The reading of secondary materials, a broad-ranging interest in other disciplines, and an extended use of comparisons and analogies do not compensate for the want of basic research."<sup>35</sup> Elkins quarrels with Donald in his book at one point<sup>36</sup> but praises him in another by referring to his approach to the Transcendentalists as the "latest, best and most precise version!"<sup>37</sup> However, in his appendix, Elkins mentions the criticism of the Newberry group, some of which he states he "promptly incorporated into the main body of the text, and in some cases this resulted in extensive revisions and additions."<sup>38</sup> However, most of his criticism concerned matters of strategy and method and in his appendix he answers points raised at that conference. He feels, first of all, that his purpose was misunderstood. He was not attempting a history of slavery but merely proposing certain questions to be answered in later studies, sketching a beginning. Secondly, he finds the use and acceptance of predecessors' works indispensable if historical scholarship is to be at all cumulative. In the third place, his analogy of the concentration camp drew extensive criticism, and Elkins feels this was because it was taken too literally and the technique itself was not a familiar one. As long as he defines the limits for its use with great care

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<sup>35</sup>David Donald, Review of Slavery, by Elkins, American Historical Review, LXV (1959), 921.

<sup>36</sup>Elkins, op. cit., p. 23.      <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 167.      <sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

(which he did) then he concludes this use was valid. Next, his comparison between systems was criticized because the differences within the two systems were blurred. Again he finds that the use of this technique was not understood. In detail, he goes on to answer quite effectively other less damaging criticisms, always holding fast to his original purpose—using a study of slavery to show how new approaches might be applied to the study of history.<sup>39</sup>

#### B. ARTICLES

As far as can be determined, Stanley Elkins has not written any articles solely by himself, but he and Eric McKittrick have collaborated in the writing of six essays on American history, a collaboration beginning in 1954, with the last one appearing in 1961. The main purpose of the first five is a study of institutions and of the last, a study of energy. In 1954, preceding the first two of the essays to be examined, the following caption appeared: "Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick are currently at work on a book of essays in American history."<sup>40</sup> This book has obviously not been completed. However, preceding the last essay written in 1961 appears this note. "At present Professors Elkins and McKittrick are collaborating on a study of nineteenth century American politics."<sup>41</sup> This book has not yet been finished.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 224-26.

<sup>40</sup>Stanley M. Elkins and Eric McKittrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part I: Democracy in the Old Northwest," Political Science Quarterly, LXIX (September, 1954), 320.

<sup>41</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, "The Founding Fathers: Young Men of the Revolution," Political Science Quarterly, LXXV (June, 1961), 160.

In 1957, two essays by these men appeared concurrently in the American Quarterly and the caption under their names read: "both of the University of Chicago, who are collaborating on a volume of essays in American history."<sup>42</sup> The first essay, "Institutions and the Law of Slavery: The Dynamics of Unopposed Capitalism"<sup>43</sup> and its companion essay, "Institutions and the Law of Slavery: Slavery in Capitalist and Non-Capitalist Cultures,"<sup>44</sup> are followed by this comment:

The reader should be told that the argument of the present essays has been so arranged as to establish the framework for two other, quite distinct arguments. One has to do with the ways in which a social structure lays down, for the individuals who compose it, institutional conditions for the "closed" system and "open" system: the American South (for purposes of contrast) representing the former, and Brazil and Spanish America the latter. The other argument also involves institutions--the question of what difference the presence or absence of institutions may have made in the way slavery, as an intellectual subject, was handled in this country. We are elaborating these ideas in two other essays: "Slavery and Personality," and "Slavery and the Intellectual," shortly to be published elsewhere.<sup>45</sup>

These two essays in the American Quarterly need not be analyzed because they appear word for word in the second chapter of Elkins' Slavery.

Interestingly, his last two chapters are labeled "Slavery and Personality" and "Slavery and the Intellectual." It appears, therefore, that at least two chapters of Slavery were written with McKittrick's aid.

Three of Elkins and McKittrick's essays center around a common theme and will be examined here together. In the Political Science Quarterly,

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<sup>42</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, American Quarterly, IX (Spring, 1957), 3.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-21.

<sup>44</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, American Quarterly, IX (Summer, 1957), 159-79.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

1954, two articles appear. The first, in the September issue, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part I: Democracy in the Old Northwest,"<sup>46</sup> and the second, in the December issue, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part II: The Southwest Frontier and New England"<sup>47</sup> give new meaning to Turner's often-criticized frontier thesis. In reiterating the common criticisms of Turner's thesis, the authors mention the fact that the cities actually became a safety valve for the farmers, and point to the unanswered riddle as to why democracy could not have come out of other forests, etc. These are items previously mentioned by Richard Hofstadter in his essay on "Turner and the Frontier Myth." These authors give recognition to Hofstadter at this point.<sup>48</sup> The paradox which exists is that Turner has always been approached on his own terms, as a textual criticism, with no attempt to handle him in any other manner. Elkins and McKittrick intend to "handle him in another manner."

One overwhelming fact remains--historians are still aware of some deep relationship existing between our history and our frontier, that somehow our form of political democracy has been affected in some manner by the frontier, that an organic connection exists between American democracy and the American frontier. If political democracy is regarded as "a manipulative attitude toward government, shared by large numbers of people . . . .

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<sup>46</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part I," pp. 321-53.

<sup>47</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, "A Meaning for Turners Frontier, Part II," The Southwest Frontier and New England," Political Science Quarterly, LXIX (December, 1954), 565-602.

<sup>48</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part I," p. 323.

as a wide participation in public affairs, a diffusion of leadership, a widespread sense of personal competence," and it can be seen that with a heavy flow of community problems and no structure of natural leadership, democracy presents itself as a brutal necessity, then the conceptual framework to test Turner's democracy-frontier relationship consists of the establishment of new communities as the model, a period of problem-solving, a homogeneous population and the lack of a structure of leadership as variables.<sup>49</sup> Robert Merton in his study of social behavior in public housing communities, Patterns of Social Life: Explorations in the Sociology of Housing, sets the tone.<sup>50</sup>

Looking at the first level of experience in the Northwest--the pioneer settlers--what could be seen happening to these "ordinary" individuals as they met the task of stabilizing the affairs of their communities? Obviously a staggering number of public roles were thrust upon them, roles that could not wait for seasoned leaders so that those who became leading citizens and first officeholders were typically men with no political experience. The question now must be asked, "Can homogeneity be applied to these early Northwest communities?" Elkins and McKittrick say yes, ruling out the possibility of a land-holding elite as out of the question, pointing instead to the self-made man as the embodiment of success. Thus at the primitive level of frontier experience, a high pitch of political awareness was forced upon the settlers, setting an egalitarian tone that worked its way into the social habits of the people.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 333-39.

Now, what happened at the second level of experience, that of town life? Referring to Hofstadter's destruction of the "myth of the happy yeoman," the authors point directly to a development not found in the South, that of an increasingly market-conscious population oriented to the market center, and thus the appearance of "teeming numbers of small towns."<sup>52</sup> In every township could be noticed the primitive levels of pioneer democracy forcing upon the settlers the burden of organizing communities and fashioning institutions. The fact that every town was a "promotion" energized and made the democracy of that town so real. Success depended upon the town's prosperity--it must grow--and the result was a cavalcade of business problems, a need for aggressive political representation, best exemplified by the promotion of the internal improvement systems of the 1830's. What made these activities so classically democratic? "It was dependence on the favor of large numbers of people in market communities where manipulation was a daily habit," a setting conducive to the equal rights philosophy, to a fundamental tolerance.<sup>53</sup> "The vehicle of accomplishment was the bargain and the agents were tradesmen maintaining a clientele."<sup>54</sup>

Turning to the Southwest, the term democratic can again be used but it would refer to a frontier less democratic than the one previously discussed.<sup>55</sup> The difference lies in two facts--the presence of a structure of planter leadership readily accepted by the people and the absence

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 341.      <sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 348.      <sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>55</sup> Elkins and McKittrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part II," p. 567.

of a variety and intensity of problems. Opportunity in the Northwest meant a variety of business promotions; in the Southwest it meant cotton. The economic and social focus was the plantation with initial prominence, power, and capital counting for more. The early government centering on the county was dominated by planters and originated in the county court structure of colonial Virginia. What then, was the nature of democracy in the Southwest? All the ceremonial reflections of the primitive frontier experience were there. The extension of the democratic style over the political life was never seriously contested because the planters' leadership in positions of power and responsibility was never seriously contested. But democracy as it existed in the Northwest was not strongly evident.<sup>56</sup>

How does the New England frontier fit into this scheme of things? Its early leadership probably could never be duplicated for ability, character, learning, stability of personnel. But this structure, too, was subjected to heavy strains from the beginning. On the local level, government evolved in a manner unplanned by the Fathers, pointing to the town. The old English institutions were transformed by the presence of factors of the town's isolation and the high aspirations of the people producing a wide range of problems that must be dealt with. So here, too, political democracy could spring up with relative ease.

Turning to the third article in this series, written in 1960, in an essay entitled, "Institutions in Motion,"<sup>57</sup> the two collaborators refer to their earlier effort, to examine the Turner thesis, asking then about the

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 567-73.

<sup>57</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, "Institutions in Motion," American Quarterly, XII (Summer, 1960), 188-92.



effect upon individuals of a certain kind of experience, and intending now to ask about the effect upon institutions when they are transplanted from one place to another, in a constant state of movement. Two notions come forward--transplanting institutions from one culture to another puts a great strain upon them and in the process of adjustment and stabilization, these institutions take on vastly new and enlarged functions. Also, the survival of these institutions in America seems to depend primarily on their portability. To prove this point, the authors use the churches as examples adding that in this transplanting process, the kind of culture into which the institution is being transplanted makes a crucial difference. In this instance, the keynote of that culture was competition with all its inherent pressures, demands for quick changes and radical adjustments.<sup>58</sup>

To the second point--portability--the authors add the characteristic of interchangeable parts and, using examples of the Army organization, the Bell Telephone Company and others, show that "the critical working arrangements of so many of our institutions are built-in, all adding up to something that can be packed up and set down again almost anywhere."<sup>59</sup>

Returning finally to Turner's thesis, Elkins and McKittrick find him as the first American to deal with motion as a basic cultural fact in American life.<sup>60</sup>

Eric McKittrick and Stanley Elkins in "The Founding Fathers: Young Men of the Revolution," attack the old problem of the interpretation of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 188-92.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

the Founding Fathers and the framing and ratification of the Constitution.<sup>61</sup> In this essay they intend to examine the three different phases of thinking on this subject--that of the wise virtuous gentlemen concerned only with the well being and welfare of their country--men, standing above all prejudices, self-interest, etc., the view still prevailing in the bulk of American history curricula; the second phase initiated by Charles Beard picturing the Fathers as self-interested conservatives, and the Philadelphia Convention as a counter-revolutionary conspiracy, a revisionist view which has greatly influenced historical scholarship of that period; and finally the new present day cycle in which the revisionists are being revised with the ideas of Beard partially discredited.

In order to assess the new approach, Elkins and McKittrick retrace "the psychology of previous conceptions,"<sup>62</sup> attempt to find the new symbolic image of the Fathers and suggest a new principle, that of energy, to replace the old principle of paternal conservatism from which an explanation of this period has been based.

"For Beard, the reality behind the movement for a constitution in the 1780's was economic interest."<sup>63</sup> The authors ask why such a view was not expressed or considered seriously until the Twentieth Century. They answer this by emphasizing the period in which Beard wrote as influential in determining his views and approach. Until the 20th Century and particularly after the Civil War, the Constitution stood as the one unifying

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<sup>61</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, "The Founding Fathers," pp. 181-218.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 182.      <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

abstraction and symbol that could command loyalties. After the war it became the symbol of unfettered capitalism as well as of the Union.

However, in the Progressive era, Americans began asking questions about the evils of the existing order and came up with vested interest as the answer, as the ultimate reality behind the life of affairs. But this was a vested interest working through conspiracy rather than through class. This conspiracy theory meant that the few, acting in secret, circumvented the law and set their interests successfully against those of the nation. But since only a few acted in this manner and since the majority of the people were honest, the conspiracy had to be a conspiracy against the people. Understood, then in light of the time in which he wrote, Beard's dominant theme of direct personal interest with the Constitution as a product of concrete economic drives and the Fathers as a group of wealthy conspirators acting against the majority will, can be better understood for what it was.

The New Deal era, a time requiring flexibility and experimentation, certainly was consistent with Beard's interpretation of the Constitution and the authors find it only natural that this interpretation should "fully come into its own" in that period.<sup>64</sup> If the birth of the Constitution was a result of the economic needs of its framers, would not it follow that this same Constitution should be flexible enough to respond to the economic needs of the present?

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

Even more than an interpretation, Beard set forth a new technique:

This was the "reality technique," which assumes that the most significant aspects of any event are those concealed from the eye. Men's true intentions are to be judged neither from the words we hear them speak nor the deeds we see them do, and the "real" forces behind historical change will turn out, more often than not, to be those of conspiracy.<sup>65</sup>

In the 1940's, modest little articles began to appear which questioned the whole structure of Beardian scholarship. However, the real destruction of this reasoning had to await Robert Brown's Charles Beard and the Constitution, published in 1956. Brown took Beard apart page by page and statement by statement:

There are absolutely no correlation between the Philadelphia delegates' property holdings and the way they behaved on the question of a Constitution. It was not true that large numbers of adult males were disfranchised; the suffrage was remarkably liberal everywhere. Farmers as a class were by no means chronically debtors; many were creditors and many others were both.<sup>66</sup>

According to Brown, Beard not only presented inconclusive evidence at all points, he even doctored what he did present:

He edited Madison's Federalist No. 10 to eliminate all but its economic emphasis; he quoted only those passages of the Philadelphia debates that made the Fathers look least democratic; he arranged his treatment of the ratification process in an order that violated chronology; centered unjustified attention on states where hard struggles did occur, overlooked the ease with which ratification was achieved in other states, and thus created a widely exaggerated picture of the opposition at large.<sup>67</sup>

However, as Elkins and McKittrick point out, Brown felt forced to operate entirely within the restrictions dictated by the "Master" so that he "exonerated the Fathers of conspiratorial intentions but convicted Charles Beard in their place: Beard had cooked the evidence, had conspired to hide the truth." <sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

Forest McDonald's We The People, published in 1958, is the first major attempt to study the Constitution again from scratch, getting out from under the Beardian categories. McDonald by attempting to do all the research that Beard suggested should be done but did not have time to do, presented more a new treatment rather than an attack of Beard. McDonald found Beard's fundamental antagonism between personality and realty interests at the Philadelphia Convention to be invalid--there was no such split. However he accepted the idea of an economic analysis but with new categories, setting up a "new and original research scheme."<sup>69</sup> McDonald's categories became "specific business interests of specific groups in specific places" and "the individual states themselves."<sup>70</sup> This new research format enabled McDonald to discover the following:

The states where ratification was achieved most readily were those that were convinced, for one reason or another, that they could not survive and prosper as independent entities; those holding out the longest were the ones most convinced that they could go it alone. The reasons for supporting ratification might vary considerably from state to state.<sup>71</sup>

Elkins and McKittrick accept most of McDonald's work but they come back to another point--McDonald's "interests" were hard, to be pursued rationally without sentiment. They find this approach unsatisfactory.

How do we account for the dedication, the force and *éclat*, of Federalist leadership? . . . The nationalist movement did have a mystique that somehow transfigured a substantial number of its leaders. What was it like, what were its origins?<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 197.      <sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.      <sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

To answer these questions, the authors turn to an examination of the difference between Federalists and Anti-Federalists. This difference had little to do with democracy as such for neither group was willing to trust the innate virtue of the people. Rather, the difference lay in the fact that the Federalists believed in such things as national interest, in a government charged with caring for this interest, in this type of government as absolutely essential for harmony within and power without, while the Anti-Federalists' chief concern was in keeping governments limited and tied to local interests.

Now, what lay behind the Federalists' conviction? The answer lies in the source of nationalist energy for the Federalists--their "profound and growing involvement" in the Revolution,<sup>73</sup> their close engagement in the Revolution on a continental rather than on a state basis. Either their careers were launched in the Revolution or the recognition they later achieved was a direct result of their work with the continental war effort. The Anti-Federalists had state-centered careers and their prestige for the most part developed before 1776. Thus:

A significant proportion of relative newcomers, with prospects initially modest, happened to have their careers opened up at a particular time and in such a way that their very public personalities came to be staked upon the national quality of the experience which had formed them. In a number of outstanding cases, energy, initiative, talent, and ambition had combined with a conception of affairs which had grown immense in scope and promise by the close of the Revolution. There is every reason to think that a contraction of this scope, in the years that immediately followed, operated as a powerful challenge.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

Because these men believed in a strong national government, they viewed the Confederation with alarm and distaste and considered it a failure, although it is recognized that this view is valid only in certain contexts. Because of certain conditions, perhaps temporary-- threats of higher state tariffs, inflationary paper money difficulties, Shays' Rebellion, etc., "the balance was tipping in enough states, to the point of a working consensus on the desirability of change, . . ." <sup>75</sup> Once this was established, the Philadelphia Convention became too important for most states to ignore.

Now, another question must be asked. "Why should the legend [of a transcendent effort of statesmanship] be so extraordinarily durable, and was there anything so special about the circumstances that set it on its way so unerringly and so soon?" <sup>76</sup> Because of special circumstances with a large number of states represented and represented by delegates of high ability thus capable of acting on a national basis, with delegates of high prestige representing diverse interests, with the "elements of secrecy, the general inclination for a national government, and the process whereby the delegates came to terms with their colleagues--appreciating their requirements and adjusting to their interests--all combined to produce a growing esprit de corps." <sup>77</sup> More explicitly:

a group of two or more intelligent men who are subject to no cross-pressures and whose principal commitment is to the success of an idea, are perfectly capable--as in our scientific communities of today--of performing what appear to be prodigies of intellect. Moving, as it were, in the same direction with a specific purpose,

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

they can function at maximum efficiency. It was this that the historians of the nineteenth century did in their way see, and celebrated with sweeping rhetorical flourishes, when they took for granted that if an occasion of this sort could not call forth the highest level of statesmanship available, then it was impossible to imagine another that could.<sup>78</sup>

So what finally happened in the ratification process?

The revolutionary verve and ardor of the Federalists, their resources of will and energy, their willingness to scheme tirelessly, campaign everywhere, and sweat and agonize over every vote meant in effect that despite all the hair-breadth squeezes and rigors the struggle, the Anti-Federalists would lose every crucial test.<sup>79</sup>

The conclusion at which McKittrick and Elkins finally arrive can best be stated in their words:

It [the struggle] was not fought on economic grounds; it was not a matter of ideology; it was not, in the fullest and most fundamental sense, even a struggle between nationalism and localism. The key struggle was between inertia and energy; with inertia overcome, everything changed.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 215-16.



## CHAPTER IV

### ERIC L. MCKITRICK

In addition to collaborating with Stanley Elkins on several articles, Eric McKittrick tackles one controversial issue in length and depth and also sketches possible approaches to other problems in American history. His approach is more methodical than Hofstadter or Elkins<sup>1</sup> but he too writes with a psychological tinge.

#### A. BOOK ONE

Between 1928 and 1937, new biographies of Andrew Johnson by Beal, Bowers, Milton, and Randall, demolished the myth that Johnson was an incompetent, immoral drunkard and proved instead that this "misunderstood" President was a man of great force and ability, of indefatigable industry and of fierce loyalty to principle, that he was a victim of slander and libel and that his adversaries were impelled by partisan, selfish, and discreditable motives. "Today's portrait of him actually contains touches of the heroic."<sup>1</sup>

In Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, Professor McKittrick reopens the case and fundamentally challenges this prevailing view. True, Johnson's honor has been restored but in doing so, his apologists set in swing a pendulum which moved far to the other side making an accurate balance impossible. Considering the speed and completeness of Johnson's

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<sup>1</sup>McKittrick, Andrew Johnson, p. 4.

collapse, "there must have been in Johnson's policy and in the manner in which it was promoted, a challenge so basic and so widely felt that consideration of morality, wisdom or the 'interests of the country' temporarily lost a great deal of their ordinary meaning."<sup>2</sup>

Professor McKittrick sets out to prove that Johnson's rigid policies differed markedly from those of Lincoln, that instead of a universal plot existing against him, Johnson's blundering, narrowness, and dogmatism forfeited the great support he initially enjoyed; that by 1866, he had acquired a mass of enemies, was repudiated by his party and drove his moderate supporters to radical extremes; that the pro-Johnson Democratic New York World correctly placed the blame when it complained in February, 1867, that Johnson's 'vigorous opposition . . . exasperated the Radicals and educated the South into stubbornness' whereas 'earlier . . . the South would have submitted more easily and Congress would have been less exacting . . . . He should either not yield at all, or have yielded sooner and saved all this gratuitous mischief.'<sup>3</sup>

"How Andrew Johnson threw away his own power both as President and as party leader, how he assisted materially, in spite of himself, in blocking the reconciliation of North and South, and what his behavior did toward disrupting the political life of an entire nation will form the subject of this book."<sup>4</sup>

In an interdisciplinary study such as this one, it would be necessary to determine what are the essentials when a democratic society emerges

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 473.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

from total war and what the members of this society expect of each other. If these expectations are met, it would then follow that a great many of the emotional by-products would drift into oblivion. However, if they are still present in a large amount, something has happened to prevent the normal channels of discharge from operating. So reasons McKittrick.

In moving from war to peace, one senses at the close of the Civil War a suspended balance between the two impulses normally present at the close of any such hostilities--war hatred and the "back to normal" impetus. Although in time the characteristics of the former came to prevail, McKittrick finds this perhaps natural but not inevitable. At the close of the war the "back to normal" urge gained headway. The stage had been set by Lincoln, and President Johnson immediately launched his program of reconstruction. He had taken charge and made definite moves in the direction of constructive action and at this time, the North was behind him and every Republican paper in the country was on his side. Why then toward the end of 1865 had an uneasy conviction spread throughout the North that the South had not really surrendered? Obviously this did not come from the mechanics of victory and surrender or from a fear of a future uprising or renewal of armed conflict. Looking into the far past for an answer to this question, McKittrick examines the feelings about war and surrender expressed by men from centuries past. He finds an always-present recognition that it was in the nature of war that the conqueror must not be thwarted from having his will in the end, that he requires a kind of total security with absolute rights, rights when so

determined to incline toward moderation and clemency in practice.<sup>5</sup> If the victor's triumph has been vested with the fullest spiritual and ceremonial meaning, if he knows his expenditures have gone for something and his objectives have been accomplished, if he has been assured of the righteousness of his principles, if he is given this assurance by ritual proofs, if the enemy has given symbolic satisfaction as well as physical surrender, then "the conditions are created wherein peace and clemency . . . will have their most auspicious setting."<sup>6</sup>

Applying this recognition to the Civil War, it is necessary to take into account the fact that this War can be termed the most democratic of all time, democratic in a total political sense, for this one had to be campaigned for, the cause had to be set at a level of general concensus with principles that would strike deeply. These principles "must be strong enough and safe enough to be carried about in the individual's own conscience throughout all vicissitudes, and they must constantly be refreshed, renewed, and re-created by a process essentially political in nature."<sup>7</sup> "The people had to be convinced, and to convince themselves, that the cause for which their sons were fighting was worth sacrifices that would go well beyond the experience of any other generation of Americans, before or since."<sup>8</sup> Thus, at the end, all ideals would have to be declared successful. What was expected in these terms of the "vanquished?" There would have to be willing repentance by the South of

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-23.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

its gravely wrong deed of succession. Assurance then would have to be given that Southern Unionists would not only receive protection but would have the responsibility of forming the post-war governments and redefining the Unionists position as right. Thirdly, the masses of Southern Negroes had to be given full protection in their newly conferred freedom, and slavery had to be fully repudiated by a stamp of moral certification by the South. Finally a new era of hospitality in the South to the North could be expected. Because some of these demands existed and were fulfilled by the Japanese and German nations after World War II, there existed a closer Union than could have been dreamed possible during the war. But something was missing in the price the South was paying to the North and none of these demands or expectations were being fulfilled. The whole protocol of defeat was violated and "the moral victory which the North imagined itself to have won had come to nothing."<sup>9</sup> Why? Was not it possible that the channels of communication of this expected protocol to the South were closed and therefore, was it the fault of the South?

The Civil War was waged primarily as a party war, becoming a Republican war and in turn a Republican victory. To be sure, there were two phases--before 1862 the "war was a popular front 'fusion' enterprise whose keynote was defense of the Union" but after 1862, the Democrats became firmly committed to peace.<sup>10</sup> When the war was going badly, a decision of sorts was made to give this war to the Republicans and let

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

them bear the responsibility for the likely failure and defeat. War Democrats, under these terms, could not remain in the party and had to come into the Union fold. The war turned into the Republicans' war, its principles were theirs, the loyalty of the people to these principals would be linked to the party.

An understanding of the concept of radicalism is important here. "We have subsequently come to picture a resolute band of men with set fanatical purposes ranging from abolition to protective tariffs, moving abreast through an entire era."<sup>11</sup> However, this was not the case at all, according to McKittrick. Radicalism actually "signified little more than the extreme position on any given issue, one which men could and did move in and out of with surprising ease."<sup>12</sup> In 1865, there was no program or unity. If there had been, would not an overwhelming positive force for universal Negro suffrage and a consistent dominant anti-Johnson theme be evident? All that can be said in the first instance is that the widely-held position advocated some sort of Negro suffrage. In the second instance most of the President's enemies did not yet exist, the keynote was party unity and harmony with the President. This radical legend was created in part by the Democrats working to picture a Republican party shot with fanaticism and disunity. It was essential to the Democratic party with its minority in Congress of less than one-third, for the Southern states to be restored immediately and accepted into the political machinery of the country. Their keynote would have to be forgiving

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., P. 53.      <sup>12</sup>Ibid.

and forgetting. Johnson's course gave great cheer to the Democrats and they rapidly moved forward with open support and approval. How then could Johnson also receive the support of the Republican party, especially from the considerable body of moderate conservatives? The answer lies in Johnson's intentions. These Republicans conceived of the President's policy as an experiment, not a final program of action!<sup>13</sup>

But what really were Johnson's intentions and what kind of a man was he? The only role he knew was that of a maverick operating on the outside of things. For he was essentially a man who lived his life defending principles; his mind was abstract; when he made up this mind, nothing could dissuade him from his course. He never thought of politics in terms of party organization and he was not really a party man. "The social outsider, the political outsider, and now the outsider who had power: such had been the stages of Johnson's rise, and it was not a background that augured well for political sensitivity or for 'moderation,' institutionally defined."<sup>14</sup> This explanation is not given in a derogatory manner but serves to explain the Reconstruction events in a much more plausible fashion.

Johnson believed the states had never been out of the Union and that "the constitutional right of the state to regulate its own internal concerns had never ceased to exist in all its vigor."<sup>15</sup> From this extreme reverence for the Constitution one might conclude that the constitutional position on reconstruction could be easily determined. However, several

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-78.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

interpretations of the Constitution in this area could be, and were, made. The "Forfeited Rights Theory" was the one finally accepted but its choice had to be made from a wide field. However, the problems in actual policy were just as acute as those of theory. The ultimate objective involved both an individual and an institutional problem, for the aim was reunion. The government would have to deal with individuals but would also have to come to terms with the complex institutional aspect. Johnson failed to understand this latter side, and instead concentrated and put major emphasis on the executive pardoning power. Thus to him the basic act of repentance was to ask for pardon. This policy broke down primarily because of the emphasis put upon it. It was taken as a vehicle of accomplishment, expecting of it results that could not come. Had Johnson used this as a channel of communication, as a means of making policy and presidential wishes clear and imposing standards upon Southern elections, a more able set of officers might have been elected in the South, provisional governors might have been furnished with clear standards by which they could have made their power and influence felt.<sup>16</sup>

At the end of the war, as previously indicated, the South was ready to accept any terms, but these terms would have to be communicated to them and also to the Northerners so that both actually understood what was happening. However, in the summer and fall of 1865, there followed an almost complete breakdown in communication between North and South. The President had privately let it be known that he expected from the Southern

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 92-116.



states three things--repudiation of the Confederate debt, nullification of the secession ordinances, and ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment.<sup>17</sup> Like clockwork these were set in motion, and the President could view his work with pleasure. In his mind, his goal of restoration was fast approaching realization, but he overlooked the contents of this restoration. However, the Unionist mind was still open. It expected Congress, when it finally met, to have a good deal to say about reconstruction. The real question was not between the Republicans and the President but between the Republicans and the Democrats over the President's intentions. For the sake of party unity, these Republicans could not bring themselves to believe that there would be any great disparity between the President's intentions and those of the party. However, more and more the Republicans began to question the way the South was behaving. Why did the South think it had the right to quibble over fine points? Was not it being quite insolent and daring? Then, too, why did the President and the political leaders seem to be speaking different languages? Why were the Copperheads so loud in their praise of Johnson? Why did not the President issue orders telling the South what the North wanted? The President as the spokesman of his government had a leading role in bringing about understanding. What actually then was he communicating to the South?

In the first place, President Johnson by constantly invoking the Constitution was telling the South to think of reconstruction as a legal rather than political problem. Next, he was assuring it that reconstruction

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 158-61.

would proceed by his authority and his alone, that it was solely an executive function. He also defined the illegitimate areas and let it be known that radicalism did not have his blessing--a radicalism advanced by men of evil intentions who were not nearly so disposed toward a speedy reconciliation. By Johnson's actions, it became clear, too, that Congress could not pass on the qualifications of southern member-elect to that body, for the process of reconstruction would be complete by that time.<sup>18</sup>

By refusing to insist on terms, Johnson was calling for a voluntary reconstruction--in essence, asking a helpless foe to prescribe his own penalties. Taking this position, he then asked the South, not the North, to sustain him in it, and to think of him as its protector against the Black Republicans of the North. It seemed as though Johnson was actually goading the South to take the liberties they finally did. Professor McKittrick's indictment reads as follows:

Having placed an extraordinary amount of faith in the non-coercive side of his role--a side which by definition put extra stress upon techniques of persuasion and negotiation--he had then proceeded to breach all the most basic principles of advocacy, diplomacy, and bargaining. As advocate for the plaintiff, he had in effect conspired with the defendant; as representative of a sovereign nation, he had cut himself off from the power of his government; as bargaining agent, he had kept shifting the terms of the bargain so that nobody could be sure what he was asking for. Even as judge, as mediator, as go-betweener--to whatever extent his role partook of those functions--he had got himself and his emotions openly involved in the claims of the one side, at the expense of those of the other.<sup>19</sup>

When Congress finally assembled, two dominant concerns were evident among the Republican majority--a "desire for legislative--executive

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 189-91.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

harmony, and determination that legislative should share with executive power in the process of reconstruction."<sup>20</sup> The emphasis on harmony with President Johnson was not incongruous for the assumption was still widely held that Johnson considered as an experiment what to date had been done. As the Joint Committee on Reconstruction was formed, Thaddeus Stevens' manipulations and power were evident, but McKittrick adamantly refutes the conclusion that by the formation of the above Committee, Congress was abandoned to radical madness and that Thaddeus Stevens dictated to an entire party or was responsible for the changes in the executive-legislative relationship as is so commonly pictured by historians. The formation of the committee was a routine matter and the resolution was passed by a great majority with ease and without a fight. The party was not at Stevens' beck and call, for it is inconceivable to believe that a large number of prominent men would allow themselves to be pushed about by such a man unless they were already headed in his direction.<sup>21</sup> Building up the evidence to prove his thesis, McKittrick points to moderation as the dominant theme in the Joint Committee (actually led by conservative Fessenden rather than Stevens) and among the members of Congress as a whole. Even after Johnson vetoed the Freedman's Bureau Bill, attacking Congress in his message to Congress for not admitting representatives from the Southern states, and even after his Washington's Birthday address with its tone of martyrdom and public acknowledgment of a split between the party and himself, there was still a great deal of hope for a renewal of harmony,

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 259-68.

and proposals for conciliation were made. Although Congress by repassing the Civil Rights Bill over the President's veto was actually serving notice it would not accept Johnson's version of reconstruction, much leeway for compromise existed without Johnson having to "lose face." In fact the public and Congressional response to the Thirteenth Amendment was so lukewarm that Stevens himself said the way was open for Johnson to have stepped in at any time.<sup>22</sup> However, Johnson failed miserably to understand or interpret what was needed or expected of him both as President and as a man.

In the issue which was fought out in the fall elections of 1866 there was an extraordinary absence of vagueness and ambiguity. It was a case in which a political party found itself campaigning against its own President and in which the President took a savagely personal part in campaigning against his party. In effect, a victory for the party's opposition would be a victory for him. The issue in this election was the immediate and unqualified readmission of the Southern states to congressional representation, and it had been reduced by then to a degree of clarity and simplicity that hardly anyone would have thought possible a few months before.<sup>23</sup>

Historians have pointed to the New Orleans riot, the "Swing around the Circle" and the press to explain the failure of the President's cause in this campaign. McKittrick minimizes the above causes, especially that of a negative press because he feels that at that time public opinion had more effect on editorial opinion than was true of the reverse, and the capitulation and reversal of the two great Johnson-Unionist dailies of New York, the Herald and the Times occurred because they "sold out to public opinion."<sup>24</sup> Johnson's attitude was at the bottom of this problem. Before the election there still existed many differences over how

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 363.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 421.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 440.

reconstruction was to be accomplished among the party leaders but on one point they all agreed--something still had to be done. Johnson himself had made this the only point on which agreement was necessary in order to unite the party. He had narrowed the choices by demanding the people choose between Congress and himself, between their idea of a reconstruction to be accomplished and his idea of a restoration already finished.<sup>25</sup>

Now that the elections were over, was not the entire business finished, had not the people supplied a final mandate for radicalism, was not the South in a position where it now could only await the final punitive actions, had not the President lost all opportunity to regain some of his influence over the party? McKittrick feels the answer must be, NO. The country was by no means yet in the hands of the extremists. The reconstruction policy was not yet decided. Passions had been decreased by the elections. The second session of the Thirty-Ninth Congress "was full of possibilities and alternatives."<sup>26</sup> If this was true, why did the Military Reconstruction Acts become law only a few months later? The answer lies in the South, Johnson, and the Northern Democrats. The radical congressmen incorrectly interpreted the election as a mandate for strong measures pursuing the argument that the legitimacy of the Southern state governments had been discredited. They could accurately point to the South's refusal to take terms of the Fourteenth Amendment seriously, and to the steady persecutions of Unionists and Negroes as evidence that the only remedy possible now was direct federal intervention. As pressure mounted, this

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 443.      <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 448.

answer lost its radical tones and appeared as a common-sense conclusion.<sup>27</sup>

In addition the Northern Democratic party played a role of considerable importance, marked by an irresponsibility at least equal to that of the most extreme elements in the Republican party. The Democrats' every effort was directed toward producing not a settlement but a stalemate. . . . Thus, on the one hand, Democratic organs, in effect representing themselves as monitors of Northern political sentiment, ceaselessly exhorted the Southerners to stand fast. On the other hand, the Democrats in Congress quite knowingly co-operated with Thaddeus Stevens in his efforts to block a moderate compromise. . . .<sup>28</sup>

They were intent on achieving a deadlock. Reapproachment between Johnson and the Republicans could not be allowed. They urged the South not to ratify the Amendment, to stand pat, for the Republicans would never dare impose harsher measures.<sup>29</sup> They built up Johnson to still appear as the South's great hope and in Congress they cooperated with Stevens to block a moderate compromise. The South still perceived of Johnson's views and directions as official and he, in turn, took every effort and opportunity to convey to the South to hold fast to its refusal to ratify the Amendment. The result, of course, was radical reconstruction.

When the Republican majority had finally had its way with reconstruction and when it had bound Johnson hand and foot, why then did it turn to impeachment, why did it bother? In the first place, to think of these men as acting in a rational and orderly manner with a well thought-out plan of organization, formed after much time of secret and devious plotting, looking in the end for more institutional power, is quite misleading according to McKittrick. The final setting was one in which men wholly out of

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 456-60.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 462.

touch with the presidency acted in a crazed state of unwholesome madness with Johnson actually taking the initiative before and after each different phase in the proceedings.<sup>30</sup>

His actions from June, 1867, to February, 1868, constituted a long series of provocations including much premeditated spite over his curtailed perogatives, which served to drive the Republican North into a state of frenzy and loathing . . . . There was a deep psychological need to eliminate Johnson from American political life forever, and it was principally Johnson himself who created it.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, says McKittrick, "The impeachment was a great act of ill-directed passion and was supported by little else."<sup>32</sup> Its principle function, that of a long-needed psychological blow-off, serving in short as a catharsis.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 488-89.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 490.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 506.

B. ARTICLES

Article I

In an article entitled, "The Study of Corruption," Professor McKittrick takes a look at the possibility of applying a new approach to the study of corruption in order to determine what is happening now and what is still to come.<sup>33</sup> He uses this essay to point out new areas of research, to make suggestions how this research might be done, and to raise questions about the history of the political machine. He wishes to see in the future a structural and functional examination of political machines in terms of such questions as, "what have they done for society--how do they work--what gaps have they filled in our political life--what has been needed to maintain them--what are the limits within which they have had to operate--what sort of future may be expected for them?"<sup>34</sup> McKittrick feels the best theoretical model for dealing with such questions is offered by Robert K. Merton in Social Theory and Social Structure.<sup>35</sup> The principal elements of this model include the establishment of a structural context--the general setting in which the need for a political machine has developed. Does the pattern exist today? What kinds of things can the political machine do today and what can it no longer do? When is a reform movement successful and why? It has never been altogether a matter of the citizens reaching a certain corruption

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<sup>33</sup>McKittrick, "The Study of Corruption," Political Science Quarterly, LXXII (1957), 502-14.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 504.      <sup>35</sup>Ibid.



saturation point and then striking down the machine. There has always been a cooperative effort, i.e., the machine has reached a point where it could not serve its clients responsibly or where its internal solidarity has been weakened. The reform movement in turn has to offer something as a substitute to the machine or this movement will die easily. All types of questions then arise out of a functional approach--what is the function of the reform movement for helping the machine to persist--is this machine an organism--how has long-term evolutionary change affected the political machine--can not a pattern of corruption be determined--what part does social mobility play?

Professor McKittrick, then, is calling for a flexible investigation of the life-study of a machine, embracing cycles and change, bringing into it analytical tools appropriated elsewhere.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 513.

## CHAPTER V

### MARVIN MEYERS

Marvin Meyers has published only one book, The Jacksonian Persuasion, Politics and Belief.<sup>A</sup> Several articles have appeared in different publications but these are not examined in this chapter, for they are found within the book in substantially the same form. Mr. Meyers brings to the study of history an approach and technique not commonly included in the kit of tools historians most generally use. The role of literary critic is more often assumed by men in other disciplines than in the field of history.

#### A. BOOK ONE

The Jacksonian Persuasion is an "inquiry into some special traits of democratic politics during the Jacksonian years," an inquiry of some special importance because "the substance and mode of Jacksonian politics have been persistent qualities of the democratic order in America."<sup>1</sup> The emphasis is placed on the political talk of the Jacksonian from which emerged a persuasion: "a broad judgment of public affairs informed by common sentiments and beliefs about the good life in America."<sup>2</sup> In the author's words, "The historical observer of Jacksonian Democracy who does not watch the politician's mouth misses . . . the main intention of the

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<sup>A</sup>Meyers, Jacksonian Persuasion.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. vi.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. viii.

movement and a principle source of its attraction for the political public."<sup>3</sup> Although the relationships between intention-performance and attitude-conduct are not necessarily close, "this book is an attempt to define the relationship, placing persuasion in the foreground and conduct in the background."<sup>4</sup>

Upon what initial facts concerning Jacksonian Democracy can scholars agree? Agreement can be found on the ideas that "politics substantially engaged the interest and feelings of American society; that Jacksonian Democracy was a large, divisive cause which shaped the themes of political controversy; that the second quarter of the nineteenth century is properly remembered as the age of Jackson."<sup>5</sup> But now questions arise. Which is accurate--a description of Jacksonian Democracy as a broad social, political and intellectual movement or strictly in terms of party politics? What was the message communicated, what conditions gave it force? In order to answer the questions it is necessary to understand first of all that political democracy was not an achievement of the Jacksonian party.<sup>6</sup> Basic principles and institutions were firmly settled with party conflict over details in evidence but not over the general democratic popular course. The new party democracy was initiated by the Jacksonians and its success was initiated by the Whigs. No great conflict existed here. In an overall view, class differences cannot with validity be seized upon as an accurate area of conflict, for party preferences show no definite class division. The opposition view of a basic and overwhelming similarity

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 5.    <sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-12.

between two almost identical parties cannot, however, be accepted either for one always must ask the question, Why then, all the fuss? Therefore, if an examination of the elements of the appeals of the Jacksonian party are taken together, an urgent political message with a central theme should emerge. The term "persuasion" will be used to concentrate emphasis "upon a matched set of attitudes, beliefs, projected actions; a half-formulated moral perspective involving emotional commitment. The community shares many values; at a given social moment some of these acquired a compelling importance. The political expression given to such values forms a persuasion."<sup>7</sup> The Jacksonian society was caught between the elements of the liberal principle and the yeoman image and in trying to harmonize them, the Jacksonians focused attention upon the Monster Bank blaming it for the sins committed by the people against the values of the Old Republic, fixing guilt upon a single agent. This crusade represented "a way to damn the unfamiliar, threatening, sometimes punishing elements in the changing order" and to cut out the source of corruption with the hopeful result of a re-establishment of "continuity with that golden age in which liberty and progress were joined with simple yeoman virtues."<sup>8</sup>

The Jacksonians were aware of the social implications of the economic changes in which they were involved and their reaction was ambivalent. They could not resist the attractions of the new economy of corporations, credit, and financial manipulation but neither could they abandon their image of the Old Republic. The old and the new were in conflict and neither could be totally rejected. The rhetoric of the Jacksonians appealed

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 10.      <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

to the people's loyalty to the old order and mollified their consciences. It did not stop them from plunging into this new order with vigor and zest. Here, then, the general direction of the Jacksonian paradox can be seen:

the fact that the movement which helped to clear the path for laissez-faire capitalism and its culture in America, and the public which in its daily life eagerly entered on that path, held nevertheless in their political conscience an ideal of a chaste republican order, resisting the seductions of risk and novelty, greed and extravagance, rapid motion and complex dealings.<sup>9</sup>

If the Jacksonian persuasion held such a common appeal, why did the Whigs retain a distinct voice and substantial following? "The Whig party spoke to the explicit hopes of Americans as Jacksonians addressed their diffuse fears and resentments . . . . The Whigs distinctly affirmed the material promise of American life as it was going and they promised to make it go faster."<sup>10</sup>

Professor Meyers presents a series of related commentaries on the appeal Jacksonian Democrats made to their generation with the purpose of conveying "the effort of Jacksonian Democracy to . . . reconcile again the simple yeoman values with the free pursuit of economic interest, just as the two were splitting hopelessly apart."<sup>11</sup>

A first approach to the appeal of Jacksonian Democracy is to examine Jackson's messages to Congress and to the nation.<sup>12</sup> In placing an emphasis on the real people as a social class, Meyers sees a judgment by Jackson of the values which attach to distinct social situations. His occupational

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.    <sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-14.    <sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-32.

class lines are drawn on the moral aspects of the occupation, distinguishing the classes by their moral orientation. The conflict of the people versus the aristocracy, i.e., those with the yeoman-republican virtues versus the privilege-holding clique broadens into a great essential opposition with the class enemy defined as the money power and the Monster Bank as the symbol of that destructive, destroying power. The whole Jackson appeal calls for a dismantling operation but promises reformation and restoration in the end. Good government must be strong but must not create a center of power. When government governs least, the **solid republican society** with its moral virtues will have an opportunity to exert its own natural discipline.

Between its minimum and maximum terms the Jacksonian appeal could promise much for little: it would destroy the Monster Bank, and it would restore a precious social enterprise to its original purity. With one courageous local amputation, society could save its character--and safely seek the goods it hungered for.<sup>13</sup>

Moving on to Tocqueville, Meyers uses his commentary as a key to Jacksonian America and from this constructs the "venturous conservative" as the Jacksonian who helped to work a social transformation as he invoked the virtues of the Old Republic. Here are a people born to equality, and Tocqueville's theoretical task is to find how equality can constitute democracy. He finds the basic antithesis--toward independence and toward dependence, i.e., submergence in the brotherhood. This "venturous conservative" finds himself in competition with his equals, striving always to better himself, for this betterment is so close to his reach. In his

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

world of constant motion, he is never content, never secure, always fearful for his possessions and hopeful for his opportunities--a conservative on property matters. His own self-image gives him all the values and he finds this authoritative self-image in the majority.<sup>14</sup>

Fenimore Cooper, considered as a social critic, is used as a direct commentary on Jacksonian manners and morals. Cooper shared with the Jacksonians an "angry sense of loss" pledging allegiance to the party "engaged in resisting the conspicuous agents of social and economic subversion" and his commentaries are directed to the public sentiment that responded to Jacksonian appeals.<sup>15</sup> Cooper saw in American society between the 1820's and 1830's a great moral descent, and Meyers uses him to "provide another suggestive approach to the predispositions of those who heard the Jacksonian appeal."<sup>16</sup>

America in the twenties is a picture of the ordinary at its best: comfort, decency, order, common sense and progress, a serene social mood, a positive trend toward utility in all areas, with quality sitting just high enough above the ordinary to raise its level. But the picture of America in the thirties is of a world without foundations. Meyers feels Cooper's deepest shock came from finding that the established families were in effect locked out of society and that the middle class was anchored to the mass and would rise no higher.

In Cooper's explicit analysis the great descent occurs in three main areas: where the rising tempo of mobility disintegrates communal centers of order and decorum; where the related quest for gain turns

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-56.      <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

feverish, despoiling real values in a speculative riot; where false democracy usurps control of opinion and taste, reducing all to a vile cant of equality. . . . In the pathology of the great descent, violent economic fevers accompany the social flux. Where nothing is fixed, money is everything. Acquisition becomes the urgent, continuous preoccupation of society, until even useful enterprise is forgotten in the universal frenzy of speculation.<sup>17</sup>

Meyers next examines the economic processes behind the Monster of Jacksonian appeals, "in order to identify more clearly some of the actual changes experienced by this generation."<sup>18</sup> The Monster represented pervasive qualities of an altered economic life, for behind it "lay a central chunk of economic reality, realized, and in the making."<sup>19</sup> A paradox is suggested in the contrast between Jacksonian aims and social consequences, and in the fact of constant political success and fundamental failure in shaping or changing the society in terms of their own rhetoric. "Jacksonians won preferment in the teeth of failure--in part, one may suspect, because of failure--and used power as a platform to denounce evils which seemed to multiply with blows."<sup>20</sup> Meyers selectively sketches the dominant traits of the economic background of Jacksonian politics in a way that is relevant to the themes of political discourse. He proposes that "the bank-boom-bust sequence was the primal experience of Jacksonian life, which fixed the content, tone, and terms of politics for as long as Jacksonianism counted in America . . . . This sequence of events exhibited in exaggerated relief, the salient features of economic change in the Jacksonian era."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 75, 80.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 103.



The end of the Bank was not the beginning of a Jacksonian economic paradise. On the contrary, "Jackson's condemnation of the Second Bank and the allocation of the fast-rising government deposits among selected state banks accentuated the inflationary movement."<sup>22</sup> However, Meyers rises to the defense of the economic processes of that era. "Economic absurdities, encouraged by an undisciplined credit system, passed over into real achievements in remarkably short order . . . . The instinct which prompted ambitious internal improvement schemes strikes one as sound . . . . That bold creature of credit, for all its follies, was the key to innovation, i.e., creative economic development."<sup>23</sup>

Thus the Second Bank and--of lasting significance--the rising New York financial and commercial center exerted a powerful influence upon the whole network of domestic and foreign exchanges. This meant, among other things, a much heightened sensitivity throughout the economy to disturbances in any one sector or area.<sup>24</sup>

Referring to his initial assumption that the Jacksonians were at once the judges and the judged, Meyers uses contemporary reports of observers like Dickens, Mrs. Trollope, Martineau, Nichols, etc., to examine the "wonderful world of work." The observers found the Americans committing their all to work, with the major theme appearing as "acquisition for ascent."<sup>25</sup> The more ambitious and successful groups and their consumption achievements were seen as a symbol for which to work and to imitate. These witnesses found land serving primarily the purposes of this acquisition and ascent--serving as a medium of production, consumption, exchange.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-9.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 112-14.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

The happy yeoman is a theme of Jacksonian rhetoric but not a concrete figure on the landscape. Instead witnesses saw a citizen in an urgent quest for gain and advancement preferring high-rich, high-gain transactions. Thus, the Jacksonians cannot be taken as innocent, struggling victims of outside social changes.

Accepting the notion of their deep involvement in the process, however, one begins to believe in the reality of the Jacksonian society with its vast energies and driving hungers; with its backward vertiginous changes and its vertigo; with its brilliant hopes, its longings, and its raw conscience. . . . Here in particular one approaches the large meaning of the corporate monster in Jacksonian politics: a gigantesque figure in a moral drama, detached from ordinary experience upon which men could focus their discontent with society, and with themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Meyers uses Van Buren's autobiography to "elucidate the relation between the old Chief and his practical administrators, between the Jacksonian persuasion and the organized Jacksonian movement."<sup>27</sup> One idea given is that for Van Buren the character of career politician was a doubtful and precarious identity. Between Meyers' terms of "Old Hero" and "Sly Fox," there must lie a difference and he finds it in pointing to Van Buren as a man who had grown up as a new career politician, the first president with no ties with the Founders, no blood lost for a national cause, no appearance on a battlefield. Meyers tries to establish Van Buren's service to Jacksonian values as loyal in intent and favorably received at first, a service finally turned against him because of aspects of his character and career. For Van Buren speaks the Jacksonian language, uses the revealing value terms, stands with Jacksonian convictions and clarifies and extends the Jacksonian view.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 140-41.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-51.

Professor Meyers discusses the relationship of Federalism to following political parties and he finds an alliance between certain Federalists and Democrats although, of course, it was not at all complete. The point is not how many Federalists formed an alliance with the Jacksonians but rather that such an alliance was possible at all. There seemed to be some sort of continuity of moods between the Jacksonians trying to restore the virtues of the Old Republic and the Federalists seeking to stabilize the order of the founders. Theodore Sedgwick's writings are used as an example of an extreme version of the Jacksonian persuasion.<sup>29</sup> "Incidentally the inquiry will suggest the indispensibility of the Jacksonians' dramatic symbolism for converting a statement of traditional social values into a belligerent partisan creed. For Sedgwick's book is a moral treatise on household economy, a puritanical Jacksonian's home companion."<sup>30</sup> The dominant theme is Sedgwick's regard for the advantages of property. Poverty and property are looked upon as fixed states of punishment and reward between which people move according to personal traits. Thus, growing poverty can be traced to an increase in corruption in men's ways. "Always the double moral: salvation is individual; and it consists first in the recognition of the value of property."<sup>31</sup> Sedgwick believed a return to prosperity could be effected by a return to the old and true values of frugality and simplicity. The grand American principle is self-elevation. Meyers finds that Jackson, Van Buren and Sedgwick had many

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 166-84.      <sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 165-66.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

traits in common; hostility toward corruption as an opposition to natural arrangements; contempt and aversion to chance, cunning, softness, sensual indulgence, with debt and credit as cardinal sins; praise for the active and productive roles; a view of politics as a system of defense for the good private life. All three find the country falling away from a golden age of morals and virtue and see salvation in a return to the values of that age.

For a free-trade, Loco-Foco version of Jacksonian Democracy, Professor Meyers chooses the writings of William Leggett, using him as the most radical, unconditional, obsessive advocate of laissez-faire, one whose conclusions are always based upon the natural laws of equal liberty and free trade.<sup>32</sup> Meyers explicitly states he does not challenge Richard Hofstadter's classification of Leggett as a doctrinaire economic liberal of the most extreme sort, but rather uses Leggett's proclamations to suggest further clues to discover why the free-trade extremism was construed as the expression of a radical appeal by his readers.

On the evidence of his extreme positions, he [Leggett] is a good Jacksonian for whom economic liberty is in the first instance a negative principle: an escape from legal privileges and controls deriving from the state for the power and profit of the few.<sup>33</sup>

For Leggett, laissez-faire meant no privilege in the form of corporate charters. He believed that the competition for them corrupted republican institutions, and the gaining of them violated the republican principles of equality and liberty. He called for a return to the order of nature in economics as a means of restoring the Old Republic. All evils are assigned

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 186-205.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

formally to privilege, especially to privilege banking. "The peculiar character of the Jacksonian Persuasion, as William Leggett gave it expression, lies in its demand for economic liberty strictly on its own terms."<sup>34</sup>

Robert Rantoul's progressive version supplies "a rare Jacksonian sketch of some higher goods, if not the highest."<sup>35</sup> Here is the philosopher concerned with the problems of man and society. Rantoul views the republican society as the utopia of the present. Inherent in society are all the right powers and capacities and in order to realize its highest aspirations, society only waits for man to perfect himself. Professor Meyers suggests that the Jacksonian moods of war and peace are different but complimentary elements of a common temperament and outlook. Rantoul mixes his moods in his speeches too. He speaks the language of utility, progress, rational self-interest, at the same time laying the axe to the feudal past, not the past of the Golden Age. The Americans to whom he spoke "took their doctrines of liberty and laissez-faire--within the universe of party politics--not as a stimulant to enterprise but as a purgative to bring the Old Republic, not very old of course, back to moral health."<sup>36</sup>

To reveal the special mark Jacksonian Democracy made upon the language and purposes of a political generation, Meyers examines the party discourse in the 1821 and 1846 constitutional conventions of New York, one before the Jacksonian era and one at its close.<sup>37</sup> He chooses New York because

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 234-75.

the parties there were in serious competition for the votes of the people and therefore highly attuned to their attitudes and interests. New York was not only relatively mature in social and economic development but also very heterogeneous in all phases of growth. All the great social trends of this era were fully experienced in New York, and, of course, New York contributed important spokesmen to the Jacksonian party. Although Jacksonian America was devoid of any great revolutionary issues, there was a war of words between the party with salvation or damnation always hanging in the balance. As Meyers reads the debates, the battle for political democracy had been basically won before the Jacksonians came to power. It was not an issue which divided parties. In 1846, agreement over most of the raging issues of that age had been reached but they still could not release their differences:

If only by the shading of a constitutional clause, a Whig must press his special concern for endless progress under democratic capitalism stimulated by the state. A Jacksonian must insist that the changing world is full of terrors, and hint at least that once there was a better, even as he helps perfect the instruments of change.<sup>38</sup>

The convention Federalists sensed and feared a slipping of their relative income and influence. "Their remedies were designed to check not revolution but the coarsening and demeaning of public life, the erosion of minority rights and interests within the legal democratic framework, the careless dispossession of a natural republican elite."<sup>39</sup> However the wary republicanism of the Founders could no longer speak to American democrats. "Henceforth the issues of political debate were to be formed entirely within a framework of democratic institutions and democratic language."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

The Jacksonian persuasion had been more a series of appeals to morals and virtues than a prescribed set of social ends. The Whigs had learned from the Jacksonians. But the final party dialogue showed tension and antagonism. There was agreement over issues, to be sure, but different shadings of acceptance existed and much of the agreement showed primarily a willingness to tolerate certain features. Everyone loved and trusted the people but the economic issues could still raise heated debates. Any consensus was reluctant, uneasy:

The Jacksonians of New York had been trapped by history: the symbols of their discontent had been reformed to meet their political standards; and the discontent which still remained, intensified in some respects, would have to await the new conventional language of a later stage, when the simple, natural order of equal rights and free trade seemed less perfect, when monopoly and privilege and conspiracy assumed new shapes.<sup>41</sup>

The Jacksonian conscience was still in evidence, indignant at what it had seen, ashamed at what it had condoned and fiercely resolved to wipe out whole orders of public evil. Finally, as the image of the Old Republic grows remote and small, "the Jacksonian persuasion tends to lose either its power or its worth; its power when the appeal to the past turns merely cranky and archaic; its worth when nothing remains but the righteous wrath."<sup>42</sup>

For purposes of later comparison, a swift look at Meyers' note on Van Buren's view of parties in Appendix B brings a clear impression of Meyers' ideas on political parties in that era.<sup>43</sup> Applied to New York

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 267.      <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 280-82.

politics, the author finds as untenable, Van Buren's view of class constituencies. "In the simplest terms the 'commercial, manufacturing, and trading classes' dependent upon privilege and favor could not supply 45 to 50 per cent of the popular vote which the Whigs regularly gathered; moreover, the farmers of the state often showed a very healthy appetite for public favors."<sup>44</sup>

However, as a suggestion as to where the Democrats looked for support, Van Buren's impressions serve a purpose. Taking into account Van Buren's hints at more subtle classifications, i.e., subdividing the classes by region and special situation into groups that had most and needed less government support and those that had least and needed most of such support, his notions of privilege and favor seeking as a key to party preference are seen in a more credible light.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 282.



## CHAPTER VI

### LEE BENSON

Lee Benson, possibly the most controversial of the five historians studied, is particularly and specifically concerned in all of his writings with method. In order to understand his reasoning, some knowledge of sociological method and of statistics is necessary. Keeping then in mind the necessary qualifications for valid understanding, Benson's material is presented in a manner intended to place primary emphasis upon his method.

#### A. BOOK ONE

Attention must now be turned, in what might be termed a disproportionate manner, to a controversial but in this context highly valuable book and interest concentrated on an intellectually difficult article in that book, in order to gain new insight into what may prove later to be the main core of the present consideration. Mirra Komarovsky, the editor of Common Frontiers of the Social Sciences and also Professor of Sociology at Barnard College, Columbia University, gives a new breadth and depth to interdisciplinary study.<sup>1</sup> The studies in this book are part of a project on the relation between the humanities and social research carried out at Columbia University under the direction of Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Professor of Sociology at Columbia, and closely allied with Columbia's Bureau of

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<sup>1</sup>Mirra Komarovsky (ed), Common Frontiers of the Social Sciences (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957).

Applied Social Research in which Lee Benson is a Research Associate.<sup>2</sup>

In relation to historiography, social reserach has given a special impetus to analytical procedures, has provided new types of data, and its findings may suggest new problems and new hypotheses for historical investigation.

In commenting on macro- and microanalysis, the editor refers to Richard Hofstadter's, "History and the Social Sciences" in Fritz Stern's, The Varieties of History, page 369: to clarify the historical meaning. The materials in Common Frontiers will be used to suggest certain modes of potentially fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation. "The first is a case in which the empirical data being accumulated in one field could be illuminated by concepts existing in another."<sup>3</sup> "A second and a closely related convergence exists when concepts and hypotheses developed in one field open new problems and stimulate research in another. History and sociology provide illustrations."<sup>4</sup> Again Professor Hofstadter is quoted from The Varieties of History, page 364:

Prompted by the social sciences the historian begins to realize that matters of central concern to other disciplines force him to enlarge his conception of his own task. Problems associated with social status, social mobility, differences and conflicts between generations, child-bearing in its relation to culture, the sociology of knowledge and of the professions, are problems which he might properly take upon himself and which are interwoven with his traditional concerns. It seems inevitable, too, that some of the discoveries made by modern social research about current mass political behavior will have some effect upon the historian's conception of political behavior in the past.<sup>5</sup>

The third is a case in which "two disciplines bring their respective theoretical frameworks to the investigation of the same empirical

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

problem."<sup>6</sup> The fourth mode arises from adjacent dilettantism. Fifth is a situation in which "a discipline adopts an entirely new method originally developed in another field."<sup>7</sup>

Lee Benson essays on "Research Problems in American Political Historiography," pages 133-183. The study was prepared under the joint direction of Professor Paul Lazarsfeld and Seymour Lipsit. An examination of this essay, though laborious and detailed, will undoubtedly throw light on a great many other factors important to the central theme of this thesis.

In terms of explaining American political development, historians do not now have available to them in meaningful and workable form, the basic election statistics over time and space and have only the very scantiest data on who voted for whom when.

It is the central proposition of this study that historians, therefore, have found it extremely difficult to function as historians and view political developments in long-term perspective. Instead, each election is usually treated as a separate phenomenon, and interpretations of voting behavior at one time do not rest upon detailed comparison with voting behavior over time and space.<sup>8</sup>

This ahistorical tendency reflects not individual failings but rather the difficulties faced studying United States political behavior. The basic design of Benson's study is to raise questions and outline research problems by analyzing conclusions reached by qualified scholars concerning a variety of significant political contests.<sup>9</sup> Because in the absence of voting data for all levels, a comprehensive interpretation of American elections on one level cannot be made, historians have therefore tended

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 25.      <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 113.      <sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 113-22.

to treat each election in an isolated fashion. But a fully-armed historian should be expected to carry out his research in three dimensions by studying the unfolding of events over time, their distribution over space and their relative rate over both time and space. An analysis of these systematic methods will be made. Systematic methods are differentiated from impressionistic research first of all by the fact that they yield data that can be represented quantitatively. Secondly, a comprehensive and rigorous classification and analysis of data is made. Finally, data is yielded which is objective, i.e., factually correct and unambiguous. Examples of non-systematic or impressionistic use of data in the space dimension are: to generalize on the national election outcome using only the election results of one state as evidence, or to take the behavior of one ethnic group in one section of the country and make a generalization concerning the nation as a whole. An example of non-systematic use of data in the time dimension would be to analyze the voting statistics in one election without regard to the preceding or following elections. In Benson's study a potentially verifiable hypothesis is identified, i.e., "one consonant with the statistics of voting behavior, systematically collected, organized and analyzed."<sup>10</sup>

It is a key proposition of this study that no interpretation of an election outcome can begin to be verified until the description of what happened is translated into who (voting groups) caused it to happen.<sup>11</sup>

In answering who voted for whom, the two types of distinguishing features are group characteristics and operative conditions which have one main

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

feature in common--some specification concerning differentiated patterns of voting behavior which are subject to systematic verification can be made.

To show an example of a generalized interpretation analyzed in terms of time, space, and rate dimensions, Benson turns to Allan Nevins' hypothesis concerning the 1884 presidential election as stated in Nevins' Pulitzer Prize winning book, Grover Cleveland. Quoting from Nevins, Benson restates his hypothesis:

The great central explanation of Blaine's defeat is that he was morally suspect because of unethical conduct in public office. At that particular time in American history men all throughout the nation were in revolt against the entire system of government by special favor of which Blaine was simply the emblem. Under those conditions, the national contest became so close that a Democrat was elected president because of accidental factors.<sup>12</sup>

In order to test this hypothesis, the following questions must be asked:

Did Blaine's candidacy merely result in a slight percentage decline in a few normally closely balanced states, or was there a nationwide Republican percentage decline of considerable proportions? Which, if any, distinguishable groups of voters were influenced by charges against his public integrity? Under what conditions, if any, did voters in specific areas become receptive to such charges? In other words, the hypothesis must make some explicit statement concerning who . . . cast less than normal Republican votes because of Blaine, and why they did so and other voters did not.<sup>13</sup>

Since the 1884 elections were extremely close, for a marked change to have taken place, the Republican vote in previous elections must have provided that party with a comfortable margin of victory. By examining tables of the New York state vote for president or highest state officer, 1880-1888, and the congressional election contests, 1876-1886, the conclusion is drawn

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 124.      <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

that "the hypothesis concerning the 1884 election which assumes that the Republican party underwent a general, marked decline, runs counter to the fact that with Blaine as a candidate the Republicans gained ground compared to the major election contests immediately preceding."<sup>14</sup> This, however, does not necessarily prove that Blaine failed to hurt the Republican party. But an examination of the percent of the popular vote cast for republican and democratic candidates in the presidential elections between 1876 and 1892 shows that in spite of the fact that in 1880 the Republican percentage of the total vote was higher than in any election between 1876 and 1892, Blaine had only 00.09% less of the total vote than James Garfield, the victorious Republican candidate of 1880, and the democratic increase was only 00.28%. This information warrants the conclusion that the hypothesis is not followed by the necessary demonstration that Blaine's candidacy cut into the popular vote attained by the Republican party at preceding elections.<sup>15</sup> Nevins' hypothesis is termed then, "demonstrably unverifiable," for it postulates that Blaine's nomination led to a widespread and considerable decline in Republican percentage strength, a view which is proved wrong by the use of systematic voting data.

However, to demonstrate further methods, a study of the extent to which voters switched alliance is made by breaking down the net turnover in the total national vote to the net turnover in the individual state's vote. By figuring the arithmetic percentage change in popular vote by states between 1880-1884 and 1884-1888, Benson finds that in 1884, 15

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p, 130.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

states recorded gains for the Republicans, seven were constant and in 16 states the GOP lost support either to Democrats, minor parties or both.<sup>16</sup> From these results, a trend in each state can be determined and a more meaningful statement concerning voting behavior can be made. Thus a Republican down-trend state showing a steep Republican increase in 1884 probably did not react unfavorably to Blaine, but a steep decrease in such a state might be due to him. The states showing significant counter-trends in 1884 are the ones to which attention must be directed. By arrangement of the states in four trend categories, the trend data show that "only 9 states displayed adverse Republican voting patterns which might be attributed primarily to Blaine's candidacy."<sup>17</sup> By increasing the trend categories, the information shows that "no factual basis exists for a possible assumption that Blaine's candidacy checked the rate of Republican increase and accelerated the rate of decline throughout the country."<sup>18</sup> The party's "arithmetic net loss in the national total vote was only 00.09%." The party had been declining since 1872. In a considerable number of states its performance was better than the short-term trend and in six states it clearly reversed an unfavorable trend."<sup>19</sup> Additional tables concentrating on the state of Massachusetts indicate that the marked Republican decrease was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in Democratic strength. Thus, "the records of elite groups which happen to be preserved and accessible do not constitute an adequate basis for the description and interpretation of an election outcome."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s Pulitzer Prize work, The Age of Jackson, offers an hypothesis which can be tested as a general interpretation analyzed in terms of the historian's space dimension. This dimension is particularly useful when a substantially new phenomenon occurs and the election of 1824 serves as a good example. Schlesinger's thesis is quoted as: 'His [Jackson's] immense popular vote in 1824 came from his military fame and from the widespread conviction of his integrity.'<sup>21</sup> Restated the hypothesis reads: "a large if unspecified proportion of the 'masses' throughout the country were impressed by Jackson's military fame, were convinced of his integrity, and, primarily for those reasons, voted for him in the 1824 election."<sup>22</sup> Thus, two things will have to be evident-- Jackson's support was national in scope and he received a large proportion of the masses' vote. In terms of statistics Benson has unearthed, widespread support means Jackson received 43% of the popular vote, his nearest rival 31% and his other two rivals, 13% each. Now the problem is not one of discovering why Jackson received widespread support but rather, why he received 43% of the votes of the small number of voters (356,038).<sup>23</sup> Out of a population of 11,000,000, then, Jackson received a small percentage of the masses' support. In the states carried by Jackson, 42% of his entire popular vote came from three states which cast only 23% of the national vote, states in which he got 80% of that vote.<sup>24</sup> Thus a distortion is evident and others can be seen, too, for the statistics of popular vote do

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 151.



not even include six states where legislatures made the choice, states from which he received only 15 of 71 electoral votes, indicating that their popular vote would have substantially decreased Jackson's national popular vote percentage.<sup>25</sup> From this analysis, the following conclusion is drawn:

Schlesinger's hypothesis regarding the extent and reasons for Jackson's vote in 1824 is not consonant with the election statistics. The factors denoted by him as voting determinants throughout the country could have been operative only in certain localities, states, and sections: they could not have had the unrestricted nation-wide impact demanded by his hypothesis.<sup>26</sup>

In his next analysis, Benson demonstrates the use of the time-dimension in terms of the election of 1896 using different kinds of election statistics in New York, in relation to certain counties and districts. He shows that "quantitative data are meaningless when isolated from either their spatial or chronological contexts. Presented in ahistorical fashion such data might seem to have one meaning; in historical context they may have entirely opposite meanings."<sup>27</sup>

For a starting point in his example of the analysis of a hypothesis for a special causal factor, Benson chooses the hypothesis concerning the election of 1860 as expressed by Samuel E. Morison and Henry S. Commager in The Growth of the American Republic:

voters of German descent all over the country were more or less influenced by the combined impact of the same two causal factors; experience with tyranny in Germany led them to support the party (Republican) opposed to tyranny (slavery) in the United States, and the personality of Lincoln swept them from erstwhile political moorings.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

To verify this hypothesis, it must be demonstrated that German-Americans consistently voted higher in comparison with voters in similar categories outside the group, that a common pattern existed for German-American voting behavior in 1850. But "if it could be shown historically that as a group the German-Americans had never displayed any homogeneous voting pattern in the nation but tended to conform to the dominant pattern of the area in which they resided, if it could be shown that this pattern obtained in the 1860 election, then clearly a different explanation would be called for than the one given in our hypothesis."<sup>29</sup>

Concluding, Benson emphasizes that by establishing objective correlations, questions concerning the why and how of political behavior can be put in meaningful form and the answers can be tested to conform with all known facts. However, these correlations can only point the way to, not take the place of, historical research.

Known data the type called for . . . and techniques to handle them would seem to be a prerequisite if historiographic advances are to be made, and if arguments relative to 'scientific history' are not to remain at the mercy of the rapid changes of intellectual climate so characteristic of the twentieth century.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

B. BOOK TWO

In The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy, New York as a Test Case, Lee Benson examines the impact of egalitarian ideas upon New York politics from 1816 to 1844.<sup>1</sup> However the book was intended basically to serve as an essay on the clarification of historical concepts.

Benson believes that American historians in the past have been unable to resolve substantive controversies because they have neglected to "view analytically and study systematically the problems inherent in the construction and use of their concepts."<sup>2</sup> In an attempt to point out what can be done with a study of such concepts, Benson takes the concept of Jacksonian Democracy and applies to it two questions: "What empirical phenomena can logically be designated by the concept Jacksonian Democracy? Does that concept help us to understand the course of American history after 1815?"<sup>3</sup> Finding it necessary to begin somewhere to verify general conclusions, he searches for the answers to his tentative questions in the background of the state of New York hoping to provide new material for a reconsideration of that concept.

This book is one of a series of publications reporting upon the results of "an exploratory study designed to adapt to historiography procedures developed in other disciplines."<sup>4</sup> Benson analyses New York state-- its voting cycles, party makeup and social, ethnic and religious patterns to show that the concept of Jacksonian Democracy bears little or no

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<sup>1</sup> Benson, Concept of Jacksonian Democracy.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. viii.

relation to New York history. His examination is intended to suggest a new theory of American voting behavior and a reconsideration of other local studies during this period.

Many of the research methods used in this study were explained and enlarged upon in the previous study. When new methods are introduced, an indication will be made to that effect. Whereas in the preceding study Benson chose examples in a rather random sample to illustrate how various interdisciplinary research methods might be used, he now uses these methods in his own comprehensive study on an enlarged theme enabling him to draw some "unorthodox" and non-traditional conclusions. The procedure in this analysis shall be to observe his methods and follow them to his logical conclusions.

New York is considered a good place to begin this study for "some of the nation's most significant political movements either originated or developed most fully in New York."<sup>5</sup> The size of the population, evidence of a wide range of social relationships, processes and phenomena add to the desirability of using New York as a test case.

First, a question: Where did the Federalists go? Traditionally, a direct lineage has been traced to DeWitt Clinton's Republican faction and finally to the Whigs, with another straight-line descent traced from Jefferson's Republican Party, to Martin Van Buren's Republican faction, to Andrew Jackson's Party. By analyzing political liberalism, the arrival of populist democracy and the Antimasonic crusade, Benson finds this view

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

simply not true. He enlarges upon this theme in research work contained later in the book.

Political equality was not Van Buren's theme. Rather he "led the conservative opposition to universal suffrage and popular election of officials."<sup>6</sup> Political equality in 1827 became the weapon of the movement for social and economic equality and this appeal can be traced to the Antimasonic Party. But first, some more-than casual relationships must be observed. One of Benson's hypotheses holds that "the boom in transportation and the dynamic expansion of the economy acted as powerful stimulants to movements inspired by the egalitarian ideals of the Declaration of Independence."<sup>7</sup> And too, "subtle, causal relationships existed among the building of internal improvements, the dynamic economic expansion evident in New York by 1825, and the religious revivals, Antimasonic crusade, and benevolent movements that followed."<sup>8</sup> Republicanism, egalitarianism, and the attack on secret societies are all tangled up together. The primary charge levied against secret societies concerned their inherent endangerment of the principles of equal rights and equal privileges. Extending this reasoning, Benson finds the most effective weapons of the Antimasons were appeals to satisfy the widespread demand for equal opportunity in all phases of American life. Thus, in respect to the Antimasonic movement the following assertions are made:

The movement extended egalitarian doctrines to embrace all aspects of American life, invested the egalitarian impulse with a religious intensity, drastically changed the style and substance of American politics, and thereby accelerated the dynamic pace of American economic growth. The People's Party won the battle for political equality

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

in New York, but it was the Antimasonic Party that gave full expression to the egalitarian impulse.<sup>9</sup>

An examination of the Antimasonic movement as a political party contributes some ideas quite contrary to popular assumptions concerning the Jacksonian Party. The fury of this new party was directed against not only masonry but the Albany Regency and the Jackson Party, representing a leveling attack against the village and urban aristocracy by the members of the lower classes. The abolition of all licensed monopolies was a logical extension of the impulse behind this new party, for to attack licensed monopolies was to attack the Regency. The charter system behind these monopolies was not only supervised but defended by the Regency. It is only one small step further to assert that in New York, it was the Jackson Party which forcibly resisted social reform. The only positive note which they struck was in the direction of states rights.<sup>10</sup> Thus, evidence is available to support Seward's claim that "the Antimasons unitedly supported the bill ~~that~~ abolished imprisonment for debt and forced its passage 'in defiance of the secret and insidious opposition' of powerful Regency leaders."<sup>11</sup>

The Jackson Party had more to answer for than the debt issue. In the area of licensed monopolies, surprisingly many found the most noxious examples in the banks chartered by the State of New York and the Safety Fund System created under Van Buren. The Regency did manage to divert attention from state to federal monopolies with the Jacksonian counter-attack on the "New Monster in Philadelphia," but this Bank War was not a campaign for free enterprise.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

The two major parties in New York show striking similarities and profound differences. Before analyzing the laborious research presented on this subject, it is necessary to take notice of a basic argument that these were two new parties, not two old parties in a new dress. Since both the Whig and Democratic parties subscribed to doctrines of political democracy alien to the Republican and Federalist, no validity exists in the Federalist-Whig, Republican-Democrat formula. The two-party system was restored in New York but it was a new two-party system.<sup>13</sup> The first step will be to examine the party leadership by asking the question-- Who led the Democrats and Whigs? The initial statement is challenging-- "If parties were characterized solely by the leaders they kept, it would be difficult to distinguish between Democrats and Whigs."<sup>14</sup> By a socioeconomic biographical examination of the top Democratic and Whig leaders, and a similar examination of the middle-grade Democratic and Whig leaders, Benson asserts a potentially verifiable hypothesis: "the men who led and controlled both major parties in New York belonged to the same socioeconomic strata."<sup>15</sup> The difference then, must lie in philosophy. Although both parties professed faith in the egalitarian impulse, the Whigs developed the philosophy of the positive liberal state while Democrats developed the philosophy of the negative liberal state. Thus, the parties stood for competing concepts of liberalism.<sup>16</sup> It is not enough,

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 62-63.      <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 84.      <sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 86-109.

however, to merely look at the positive and negative views. Additional points must be established in regard to both parties' ideas of the "Good Society," their major objectives, and their methods of achieving them. The transition from Federalist to Whig theories lacks continuity for the Federalist thesis was built on the positive paternal state.

Much can be determined from the movement for free-banking in New York. Because of its terms of existence, New York banking constituted a public enterprise and men interested in banking had to be interested in politics:

It was not the Regency that inaugurated the practice of using the distribution of bank charters and stock to strengthen its political machine. But the Regency developed the practice to a high degree of efficiency. Moreover, despite the abuses it permitted, the Safety Fund System, sponsored and controlled by the Regency, represented a significant, positive innovation in New York and American financial history.<sup>17</sup>

Under the Safety Fund System, the state made the banks liable for each other's operation and therefore the banking system became a tightly controlled legal monopoly. Thus the Regency policy, far from embracing laissez-faire, enlarged the powers, duties and functions of the state in this area and found it necessary to resort to direct intervention to control and regulate the system. Ironically perhaps, the politicians responsible for the creation of the New York Bank Commission in 1829, "had won the election in 1828 wrapped in what they claimed was the mantle of Thomas Jefferson, marching under the banner of Andrew Jackson."<sup>18</sup> The Whigs did not wish to do away with state responsibility. To the contrary,

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 91.      <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 93.



they wished to use the state to insure political and economic equality, an economic equality which did not exist under the tight bank system. Under the free banking law which the Whigs passed and the Democrats fought, this traditional responsibility of the state to protect and advance the general welfare was maintained. It made the same opportunities and privileges legally available to all men.

Similarities between the Whigs and Democrats include repudiation of Federalist mercantilist theories, commitment to equal rights and antimonopoly, liberation of enterprise and repudiation of the paternal state, and stated objectives of democratizing American enterprise.<sup>19</sup> But profound differences are evident. The Whigs looked forward to a dynamic, complex, industrialized society with the party providing the conditions necessary to launch the United States in its economic growth. To cope with problems inherent in this growth, the theory of positive liberalism was adopted. The Democrats looked backward to the age of Jefferson's vision--a simple, agrarian negative state. Thus the Democratic Party in New York consistently opposed those reforms now attributed to manifestations of Jacksonian Democracy. Thus, too, "the Whigs come closer than the Democrats to satisfying the requirements of historians in search of nineteenth-century precursors to twentieth-century New Dealers."<sup>20</sup>

Benson now directs his attention to the group voting patterns in the 1844 election, with the primary objective of determining who voted for whom.<sup>21</sup> The high turnout of voters for this election indicates quite well

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

the campaign's intensity and impact, yet there was very little fluctuation in party percentages. This stability suggests the hypothesis "that the frenzied 1840 and 1844 campaigns reinforced and deepened party loyalty but did not markedly alter party affiliations."<sup>22</sup> To support this hypothesis, he demonstrates the existence of voting cycles in New York. A voting cycle is defined as "a recurrent pattern of fluctuation in county party percentages."<sup>23</sup> Each voting cycle is divided into a fluctuation phase and a stable phase. Marked changes in party percentages occur at successive elections in a large number of counties during the fluctuation phase. During the stable phase, comparatively little change occurs. By adding the arithmetic percentage changes in a major party's vote in all counties and by dividing by the total number of counties, the average fluctuation between elections can be found. By comparing the average fluctuation of major parties at successive elections and inspecting both the absolute and percentage county votes, natural breaks in the series become evident. Some degree of repetition in the sequence of events is assumed. Using categories of equilibrium years, overlapping and nonoverlapping equilibrium years, and dealing with oscillations in county party percentages, the secular trend, stabilization levels, net declines, net turnover of voters, minor party votes, and central tendencies, Benson finds that "the most revealing thing that happened in the 1844 election was that so little happened!"<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 137,

Now, who voted for whom in 1844? According to many historians, the Whigs represented the owners of accumulated property, the business community, the squires and prosperous farmers living along good transportation routes while the Democrats represented the common man, artisans, farmers, small businessmen, urban workers, etc. Although he does not think of New York as an exceptional case, Benson only asserts that the above views did not hold true in New York. A logical fallacy is evident in the traditional assumption, for it tries to discover the relationship between two variables (economic class and political affiliation) without considering the influence of other variables. By analyzing with multivariate analysis the voting behavior, Benson discovers the traditional historical interpretation lacking foundation.<sup>25</sup> If the Democrats had been the party of the lower classes, would the two parties have been almost evenly balanced on the state, county, and city levels which he shows they were? This relationship then was a spurious and casual one in all areas and the available evidence also supports the argument that the complexities of political behavior cannot be satisfactorily explained by the simplicities of an interest group theory of politics. If this study rejects the "economic determinist interpretation that Turner and Beard pressed upon American political historiography," it also rejects the proposition that American political differences are random in character. Benson advances a counter proposition: "that at least since the 1820's when manhood suffrage became widespread, ethnic and religious differences

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 140-56.

have tended to be relatively the most important sources of political differences."<sup>26</sup> He does not attempt to prove this proposition but only to show that it holds for New York in 1844. Historical literature asserts that the Democrats were the party of immigrants and Catholics, and the Whigs of native, particularly New England, Protestants. This is inaccurate and misleading for analysis of data shows the sharpest political cleavages between different groups of immigrants.<sup>27</sup> Benson works out a detailed classification method with two main categories-- "Groups in United States by 1790" (natives) and "Groups arriving in significant numbers after 1790," and breaks the latter category down into "New British" and "New Non-British" with a smaller breakdown within both of these groups indicated. Then, by taking each category and using impressionistic data such as observations by contemporaries combined with the systematic methods of analysis previously explained, he finds that the New Non-British strongly supported the Democratic Party and the New British just as strongly opposed it. Because the first category is larger than the second, more immigrants voted Democratic than Whig but this is only a "demographic accident."<sup>28</sup> He discovers the native voters evenly divided.

Benson feels it necessary to make a distinction between a party's program and its character. The combination of the two form the image projected to the public. The parties create also an official self-image and an official image of opponents. The most important and revealing means used to project party images are the platforms, addresses and

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

candidates adopted at formal conventions and Benson believes, with careful handling, they can be useful in interpreting voting behavior. The official images projected by political parties serve two functions:

- 1) They permit analysts to ascertain the grounds on which political parties appealed for support and they help them to draw inferences about why men voted as they did.
- 2) They also permit analysts to draw inferences about the arguments and appeals that practicing politicians believed would win support from certain groups of voters.<sup>29</sup>

But if the data are systematically examined and the inferences drawn from them are explicitly stated, interpretations of voting behavior need not remain exercises in subjective relativism. These procedures not only enable the historian to check the adequacy of his data and the logic of his reasoning, but they expose them to analysis by other specialists who are perhaps more alert to factual errors or to weak links in the chain of argument. Thus the chances improve that disagreements can be resolved without recourse to personal philosophies, values, or intuitions.<sup>30</sup>

This information will be used to help explain the group voting patterns previously identified. The policies and principles advocated by the two major parties at their 1844 national and New York party conventions are analyzed under the following headings: 1) the general and specific role of government in a democratic republic; 2) the locus of government power; 3) the role of power of three branches of government; 4) foreign policy; 5) character self-portrait; 6) official image of opponents.<sup>31</sup> Nationally, the Democratic platform derived from the concept of the negative liberal state, located the center of power in the states, endorsed the extensions of presidential power, held to a dynamic, expansive foreign policy, presented itself as the preserver of the Constitution and the protector of the masses and the champion of American liberal tradition, and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 219-53.

identified the Whigs as the old Federalists in new disguise. In the New York convention, the main differences were that state's opposition to a strong Texas plank, its failure to reaffirm support of a strong president, and its re-emphasis on its agrarian image. The Whig national convention confirmed the Whig belief in the great powers of the federal government with a complimentary relationship with the states. It offered resistance to the extension of presidential powers, projected its image as a party dedicated to moral and material progress. The New York Whigs advocated the protective tariff and no extension of national territory.

The next step is to examine the impact of the above, very briefly-summarized images upon the New York voters. This is done by concentrating on the Texas issue.<sup>32</sup> The widely accepted idea is that the 1844 election was a referendum for the annexation of Texas. Using systematic procedures, Benson finds in New York that "annexation was mildly unpopular among the electorate as a whole, and highly unpopular in certain limited areas where antislavery sentiment was intense."<sup>33</sup> More important, he finds in 1844 that New York voting patterns were little affected by current issues.<sup>34</sup> What then did determine New York voting patterns in 1844? To answer this question, Benson outlines a theory of American voting behavior.<sup>35</sup>

Transforming factual descriptions of who voted for whom into a series of questions is to Benson a crucial stage in research design and practice, and these combined with a well-grounded and well-developed theory of

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-69.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 270-87.

voting behavior would make it easier to interpret the 1844 New York results. No such theory now exists. Turner and Beard gave a semblance of order to a bewildering conglomeration of "facts" and this was one of the major reasons for their popularity but interpretations of American behavior can no longer rely on their version of economic determinism. Consequently, since Americans now seem to be adrift on a sea of uncertainty, Benson will make a start on the problem by extending the theses of Richard Hofstadter in The American Political Tradition and Louis Hartz in The Liberal Tradition in America.<sup>36</sup> Instead of supporting the conflict school, Hofstadter pointed out the common climate of American opinion. He says that as a major component of American history, "no significant group has challenged the legitimacy of a capitalist system of political economy."<sup>37</sup> Hartz focused on the liberal tradition as the American political tradition. The "Hofstadter-Hartz thesis holds that in the United States, broad and deep agreement has existed upon the very issues which elsewhere have provided the fundamental bases of political bases of political conflict."<sup>38</sup> From this Benson advances the following theory:

the wider the area of agreement on political fundamentals, the more heterogeneous the society (or community), the larger the proportion of its members who have high levels of personal aspirations, and the less centralized the constitutional system, then the greater the number and variety of factors that operate as determinants of voting behavior. Applied specifically to the United States, this proposition leads us to claim that all American history is reflected in past and present voting behavior.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 272.      <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 275.      <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

The Hofstadter-Hartz theory assumes the following to be true:

in the United States, unlike other countries, almost every social conflict, tension and disagreement may function potentially as a significant determinant of voting behavior.

If the assumption is granted, we can then deduce that a comprehensive theory of American voting behavior must satisfy the following requirements: 1) It should be consonant with the agreement on political fundamentals stressed by Hofstadter and Hartz. 2) It should not only identify but classify the kinds of determinants that have influenced American voting behavior. 3) It should specify the conditions under which certain determinants are likely to exert more rather than less influence upon voting behavior. 4) It should identify the kinds of voters most likely to be influenced by certain determinants under specified conditions.<sup>40</sup>

To make a start on the problem, Benson develops a crude classification system in order to alert historians to the possible determinants of human behavior in specific situations and to widen the frames of reference of American historians. The three categories of voting determinants devised are: 1) pursuit of political goals by individuals or groups--encompassing all voting behavior designed to produce specified state actions; 2) individual or group fulfillment of political roles--voting behavior determined by membership in a certain group or occupancy or a certain position and by adherence primarily to tradition or habit; 3) negative or positive orientation to reference individuals or groups.<sup>41</sup>

A combination of determinants must always be considered.

Benson applies this partial theory and classification system to New York voting patterns in 1844. He concludes:

the stand of the major parties on socioeconomic issues had relatively little effect upon bloc voting in New York; we must attribute that phenomenon more to factors initially associated with positive and negative reference groups and subsequently with fulfillment of political roles.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 276-77.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 328.



In conclusion, is Jacksonian Democracy a concept or fiction?

Every version of that Democracy contained these elements:

1) Andrew Jackson and his successors led (really or symbolically) a particular political party; 2) the party drew its leaders from certain socioeconomic classes or groups; 3) the party received strong mass support from certain socioeconomic classes or groups; 4) the party formulated and fought for an egalitarian ideology that envisioned not only political but social and economic democracy; 5) the party implemented a program derived from or consonant with its egalitarian ideology; 6) the opposing party drew its leaders and mass support from different socioeconomic classes and social groups, and opposed egalitarian ideas and policies.<sup>43</sup>

At least for New York, these assumptions have been proven to Benson and by Benson as untenable and the use of this concept has been extremely harmful in the study of American history.<sup>44</sup>

If later research proves New York to be a representative state and this book's findings credible, what then? Benson suggests an alternative proposal: renaming the Age of Jackson as the Age of Egalitarianism, developing the concept of the egalitarian revolution and proceeding from there to a more satisfactory synthesis of the period.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 329.      <sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 332-33.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 337-38.

C. BOOK THREE

Serving as another study of method in addition to advancing some new outlooks on the problems involving Turner and Beard, is Benson's Turner and Beard, American Historical Writing Reconsidered.<sup>1</sup>

Lee Benson intends to challenge the popular tendency to consider the ideas of Turner and Beard as coming from and representing radically different theories of history. Rather, he finds fundamental similarities. They both drew upon European models: they both used economic interpretation and economic determinism interchangeably; both presented contradictory and ambiguous theses.<sup>2</sup> The underlying uniting theme is "the impact upon American scholarship of European theories of economic determinism and economic interpretation of history."<sup>3</sup> Several questions suggest themselves:

Did the frontier thesis owe more to Old World theory than to New World experience? Had Loria's theory of "free land" tended to misdirect the course of American historiography? Would it be accurate to describe both the "Turner thesis" and the "Beard thesis" as versions of the "Loria thesis?" Could the difference in their intellectual milieu help to explain the difference in their emphasis, Turner's upon geographic place and Beard's upon economic class?<sup>4</sup>

Benson advances the thesis that the free-land system of Achille Loria, Italian economist, exerted a profound influence upon Turner.<sup>5</sup> Loria believed in a rigidly deterministic economic interpretation of history stating the fundamental proposition that the relationship of man to the amount of free land available for cultivation holds the key to human

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<sup>1</sup>Benson, Turner and Beard.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. vii-viii.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. viii.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

history.<sup>6</sup> The relationship between productivity of the soil and density of population is the ultimate factor in determining the various historical periods of the economy of nations. Capitalistic property is impossible as long as free land exists that can be cultivated by labor alone, and as long as a man without capital can take up land in an unoccupied area. With increasing population and diminishing fertility of the soil, the era of free land ends and the era of capitalistic production begins. This applies vividly to the United States. The conclusion is reached by Loria that democratic methods in America are being destroyed by the cessation of economic freedom caused by the total occupation of land.

Benson shows that Loria greatly influenced Richard T. Ely and did much to shape economic thought in the United States. In turn, Turner himself owes a debt to Loria for as is pointed out, Loria played an indirect role in the shaping of the frontier thesis. "Loria was, if not the most important, at least a most important influence upon the Turner hypothesis."<sup>7</sup> Benson is not questioning Turner's originality but rather, by proving Loria's influence, it is now a much easier task to interpret the Turner thesis for he who would understand Turner must first master Loria. In this context, Benson makes the following statements about the frontier thesis:

1. The thesis was based on an elaborate and detailed system designed to analyze scientifically the structure of all human society.
2. American history was literally a record of historical evolution.
3. "Free land" literally meant free land,

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-10.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

without price, unoccupied, accessible to all, and capable of cultivation by simple manual labor. 4. The presence or absence of free land was the fundamental determining factor in society. 5. The passing of the frontier literally meant that the safety valve was closed. 6. The closing of the safety valve meant that a new epoch in American history was dawning.<sup>8</sup>

Next, Benson claims that Turner's doctrines are also a product in part of the contemporary setting and his own particular development.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis was a direct product of its historical setting. Benson looks at the powerful forces at work to produce the frontier thesis and to insure its widespread acceptance. Central to the analysis of the historical setting in which Turner matured is the impact upon agriculture of the Communications Revolution. "It is not an overstatement . . . to assert that the Communications Revolution produced at least three unprecedented historical phenomena: an international agrarian market, an international agrarian depression, and, as a climax, international agrarian discontent."<sup>10</sup> The largest single factor in producing these conditions was the post-Civil War extension of railroads into the American West. Because of the intense world-wide concern in the extension of agricultural settlement westward and the accelerating momentum of land reform, Benson terms as "understandable" the growing attention given by contemporary scholars of Turner's time to the role played by land in shaping American history.<sup>11</sup> Despite this interest in questions relating to the public domain brought about by the Communications Revolution, as late as 1890, the date of the exhaustion of the land and the effects of this exhaustion were believed to be years away.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 42-89.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

However, this theme of free land closing and the safety valve was heard and used many times before Turner's thesis appeared to support such political arguments as restricted immigration, irrigation of Western lands, etc. Too, numbers of influential men for one reason or another pointed to the state of the public domain as a major factor in the striking changes seen in economics, politics and social organization. It is doubtful, however, according to Benson that the American public in the early nineties as a whole subscribed to the validity of this argument. Of course, the important question here concerns how much Turner's historical thinking was affected by the contemporary historical setting. As a literate man of this time, he had to be familiar with these ideas. It would have been impossible for his thesis not to have been permeated with ideas stemming from his intellectual milieu. Not only was he exposed to contemporary arguments centering around the public domain, but Benson finds him sharing the opinions of Ely and Walker. The frontier thesis fitted neatly into the temper of the times and its ideas could become powerful ammunition in contemporary ideological warfare. If these conclusions now are correct, than it is valid to assert that the Turner thesis must be subjected to a thorough and searching re-evaluation.<sup>12</sup>

Benson's essay on Beard is an extremely difficult one to summarize and still do it justice, so no summary will be attempted. Rather, a brief look into Benson's findings will have to suffice. In Benson's views Beard wrote an eye-opening critique of the Constitution that stimulated

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 60-90.

American historians to re-examine the American past, but "when he ventured into unchartered areas and proposed an alternative interpretation, he became ambiguous and confusing."<sup>13</sup> One of the reasons for this was the dualism evident in Beard's thought. He confused an economic interpretation with economic determinism and used the two terms interchangeably which made for all sorts of confusion. The fatalism of Loria and the interpretation by Seligman and the philosophy of Madison were not one and all the same and did not deal with the same subject or content. Yet Beard in his confusion mixed all of them up. Beard's

periodic emphasis upon economic conflicts between agrarians and non-agrarians strongly indicates that he was influenced by Loria, both directly and indirectly via Turner's "frontier version of the free land" theory of history. Thus, Beard's ideas did not derive from a consistent general theory; they derived from contradictory concepts, some taken from "economic determinism" and some from "economic interpretation." Inevitably, as a result of this unresolved dualism, his treatment of the Constitution was ambiguous and confusing.<sup>14</sup>

Benson explicitly supports Hofstadter's observation pointed out in a previous analysis, that Beard could hardly have failed 'to absorb the style of thought of the Populist-Progressive-muckraking era . . . .'<sup>15</sup> Beard's mis-reading of Seligman and Madison occurred because he dismissed the non-economic arguments as incidental and he simply did not understand Seligman's interpretation. As a Progressive, discounting non-economic views and predisposed to a theory of economic determinism (by

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 96.      <sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-101.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

the surrounding scene and intellectual climate) and convinced of the inadequacy of previous schools of American historiography, he accepted the Lorian theory as a new light and read it into places where it was not.<sup>16</sup> Apart from this dualism, "his book suffered from his rudimentary system of classification, the low-grade quality of the data he extracted from secondary sources to fill its categories, and his inability to apply the system rigorously."<sup>17</sup> Benson takes apart Beard's thesis and hypothesis bit by bit, examines it carefully, noting contradictions and ambiguities and explains in light of the above why they existed and then states the seven sets of claims which he finds Beard asserted.<sup>18</sup> In this restatement of hypothesis he excludes the following: claims irrelevant to Beard's main hypothesis, claims which contradict the hypothesis, claims which indicate logical inconsistency, claims representing overstatements of the hypothesis. He also modifies overstatements which resulted from Beard's unsuccessful attempts to summarize material he had presented at length. Benson does not wish, to alter the basic character while appraising the hypothesis. When he is finished, he feels he has satisfied the first qualification of a useful critique of Beard-- he has identified Beard's questions and restated his answers. Beard's recent critics have not done this.

Robert Brown in his 1956 edition of Charles Beard did not recognize the dualism in Beard's thinking and treated economic determinism and interpretation as the same thing.<sup>19</sup> He failed to state Beard's thesis

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 106-7.      <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 113-35.      <sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 140-47.

He failed to state Beard's thesis accurately and his misstatements stem from a fundamental misreading of Beard. Therefore, the logical structure of his critique collapses. Since his summary cannot be accepted, his evidence is also invalid. Forrest McDonald in We, The People misread Beard also and directed his critique against a non-existent thesis. He misplaced quotation marks and ellipses when summarizing Beard's conclusions, he rewrote Beard. Thus his appraisal cannot be accepted. Benson's approach is to carefully juggle back and forth between what Beard said and what these men said Beard said. He rejects both Brown and McDonald and now moves ahead to "appraise Beard's design of proof and his method of securing the data that he believed would bear out his hypothesis."<sup>20</sup>

According to Benson, Beard offered almost no evidence to support his acute insights into the unequal power of men to influence opinions and control decisions. His main preoccupation was with his claims about the relationships between ideas and interests. However, there was a logical fallacy in his design of proof and in his method which did not permit him to test those claims.<sup>21</sup> In his design of proof, Beard had to establish two variable relationships. He classified men 'as economic beings dependent upon definite modes and processes of gaining a livelihood' and then he ascertained on which side of the Constitutional issues they were found. By finding almost all members of certain personal property groups as pro-Constitution and all opposition coming from the

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 150.      <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 152.



non-slaveholding farmers and the debtors, Beard found it fairly conclusive to assert that the fundamental law was the product of a group of economic interests which expected beneficial results from the adaptation of the Constitution. Benson says this can not be done.<sup>22</sup> In order to do this, Beard would first have had to prove that perceived self-interest is the only aspect of class position that influences political behavior. This assumption is fallacious and leads to another even more so--that class position is the only determinant of political behavior. Therefore, Beard's design of proof is fallacious because it does not consider the possible influence of other variables. Benson uses a test case complete with statistical tables to prove his point. He defines his method as multivariate learned under Paul Lazarsfeld. It works like this: any time one wants to discover the relationship between two variables, the design of proof must be constructed in such a manner as to permit a consideration of the possible influence of at least one other variable. The more variables considered, the greater the chance of accurately verifying or discrediting an hypothesis. Benson emphatically feels historians must become acquainted with this method, "It is the logic of multivariate analysis, not its specific applications in other disciplines, that seems to me to have potential value for historiography."<sup>23</sup>

Now on to Beard's method:

Despite the obvious imprecision and fragmentary nature of the data, Beard concluded that collective biographies of the Founding Fathers . . . and of the delegates to the Pennsylvania ratifying convention--the only one that he studied--supported his claims about the framing

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 152-60.    <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

and adoption of the Constitution. He based this conclusion on the assumption that his method of compiling collective biographies of men appointed or elected to political assemblies enabled him to discover the class division of opinion.<sup>24</sup>

This is fallacious, for Beard had no right to draw inferences about the class divisions of opinion in the country at large from the data he collected. Benson finds Beard's critics falling into the same trap and not advancing beyond Beard. Benson's conclusion carries a serious indictment:

Scholars like McDonald who fail to venture forth with theories, hypotheses, and questions, fail to recognize that good research designs permit investigators to explore problems by checking, modifying, or abandoning hypotheses and developing new ones as they proceed. Ideally, such designs are not biased in favor of confirming ideas tentatively advanced during the early stages of work. True, the ideal is seldom attained.<sup>25</sup>

Even today, Beard's main hypothesis cannot be appraised. No convincing class has been made for or against, mainly because adequate data are not yet available. However, with existing data, Benson intends to make a tentative appraisal to decide only whether or not Beard's hypothesis has plausibility.<sup>26</sup> Benson examines carefully the numerical divisions of opinion, using this section as much to tear apart McDonald and Brown as to bring in acceptable data, compare various sources, using statistical methods and data to analyze Beard's claims. He jumps from one quotation to another, comparing and contrasting, dissecting and molding together again. He then, turns to group divisions among voters, uses statistical tables, county percentages, voting returns, census evaluations, ethnic and religious group figures, New York figures, etc.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 161-62

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

Benson finds himself even more poorly prepared to evaluate content of opinion for how can men's opinions be determined if it is not known what groups held these opinions? As a substitute measure, he considers the opinions of individuals such as Madison and Hamilton gleaning most of his information from recent biographies. His final conclusion is as follows: "Not even the elementary data . . . necessary to test Beard's main hypothesis have been systematically collected. The data now available indicate that some of Beard's claims are potentially verifiable and that some are not."<sup>27</sup> However, he does assert that "Beard's economic determinist claims about men's motives form the weakest part of his hypothesis."<sup>28</sup>

Out of all this then, Benson decides to venture a tentative appraisal for further thought and research--specifically to incorporate some of Beard's claims into a social interpretation of the Constitution that may work.<sup>29</sup> Borrowing heavily from Robert Merton's Social Theory and Social Structure, Professor Benson advances a tentative hypothesis as a guide for future research, an hypothesis that can be best understood in his own words:

1) The behavior of men is determined more by the ends they seek than by the means they use to achieve those ends; specifically, men favored the Constitution largely because they favored a Commercial Society, they opposed the Constitution largely because they favored an Agrarian Society; 2) The ends men choose are positively related to the "modes of processes" by which they live, the social roles they occupy, the groups with whom they identify, and the groups with whom they regard themselves in conflict. 3) In certain historical situations, men who choose certain ends are more likely than their opponents to possess the qualities and resources needed for victory; specifically, in the United States during the 1780's, commercial-minded men like Hamilton possessed the qualities and resources needed to defeat agrarian-minded men like Clinton.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 214.      <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 215-33.      <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

Two further ideas need to be reiterated here. Benson does not show disrespect for Beard, he does not ridicule him or even place him in a particularly unfavorable light. As an analytical historian, he feels compelled to point out Beard's errors but he reiterates again and again his respect and admiration for Beard's ground-breaking work, for Beard's pioneer spirit, and for his scholarship, crude that it may be.

On the other hand, he spends a great deal of time tearing apart Brown and McDonald on almost every conceivable point--approach, scholarship, intelligence, use of data, evidence, etc. He even devotes Appendices to this purpose.

As an interesting followup on Benson's ideas regarding Beard as stated in Turner and Beard, the Mississippi Valley Historical Review was examined for an account of the 1960 annual meeting. In the account of the proceeding of that meeting, the following summary appears:

The most controversial session of the entire meeting was unquestionably that . . . devoted to "The Constitution and the Economic Interpretation of History." Paul F. Sharp . . . performed admirably as referee. The one paper, "A critique of Beard and His Critics," was presented by Lee Benson, Columbia University. Robert E. Brown, Michigan State University, Forrest McDonald, Brown University, and E. James Ferguson, University of Maryland, served as commentators. . . . Professor Brown, assuming five major propositions on the part of Professor Benson, commented: 1) Beard must be judged by what he said, not by what Benson thought he meant or said. Benson's statement leaves out most of the original Beard hypothesis. 2) If Beard could not possibly have tested his own hypothesis then Benson and Brown have reached substantially the same conclusion, namely, that we must discard the Beard hypothesis and start over. 3) McDonald and Brown have not vitiated their own conclusions by following Beard's faulty proof and method--"I insist . . . that I have tested the Beard hypothesis, regardless of Benson's claims to the contrary, and my test has found it wanting." 4) If McDonald and Brown--two misdirected critics--have buried Beard's hypothesis, Benson has in reality aided with the burial ceremony. 5) Benson's substitute proposal of a new social interpretation based on a conflict between agrarian-minded and commercial-minded men does not even resemble the original Beard hypothesis. . . . McDonald in a vigorous and

fiery defense of his criticism of the Beard hypothesis concluded emphatically, "economic interpretation of the Constitution does not work." Professor Ferguson served somewhat as the compromise commentator. He described Benson's approach as an attempt to rescue Beard's mechanical thesis by incorporating it within a higher concept of economic causation. Commenting on Benson's dismissal of the Beard-McDonald controversy as founded in mutual error, he expressed the opinion that the facts in the case would be significant if they could be proved. . . . In ending, he entered a plea for a more historical approach, declaring that the movement for national government had an identity before 1787. It was prefigured between 1781 and 1783 under leaders who later became the principal spokesmen of the Constitution . . . . The session was a stimulating and heated one that ranged from intellectual disputation on a high level to a four-man-tag team.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLVII (September, 1960), 290-93.

D. ARTICLES

When I was studying at the University of Washington, Dr. Thomas Pressly of the University history department made available to his students a paper prepared by Lee Benson and himself and read and discussed at a session of the American Historical Association annual meeting, December 29, 1956, a session chaired by C. Vann Woodward with David Donald, David Potter, and T. Harry Williams as discussants. The paper is entitled, "Can Differences in Interpretations of the Causes of the American Civil War be Resolved Objectively?" (Mimeographed.) This paper is particularly interesting because of the response it received as noted in the minutes of the Annual Meeting. To answer their stated question, the authors first proceeded with an analysis of the differences in five interpretations of the Civil War, those of Charles Ramsdell, Arthur Cole, Louis Hacker, David Potter and Allan Nevins. The conclusion was drawn that the differences stemmed from an arrangement of evidence in five chains of events and these authors "know of no methods by which the total or over-all differences between the five interpretations, as they are now stated, can be resolved objectively."<sup>32</sup> Benson and Pressly then went on to an analysis between two sub-interpretations of the re-opening of the African slave trade and found insufficient data on which to resolve these differences. The remainder

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<sup>32</sup>Benson and Pressly, "Can Differences in Interpretations of the Causes of the American Civil War be Resolved Objectively?" Paper read before Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, at St. Louis Mo., December 29, 1956. (Mimeographed.) pp. 71-72.

of the paper is taken up with an explanation of how such a problem might be approached and examples of this given. By the systematic and comprehensive collection and evaluation of evidence, objective indexes can be devised. To the authors, "the most effective way to attempt that task [resolution of the differences in interpretation of the causes of the Civil War] is to try first to resolve the differences between sub-interpretations" in the above manner.<sup>33</sup>

In the notes on the St. Louis Meeting found in The American Historical Review, April, 1957, the following interpretation and reactions are recorded:

The authors of the paper found that differences between interpretations arose largely from the arrangement of evidence into five distinctive "chains of events" and concluded that they were unable to find any methods by which the over-all differences between the interpretations could be resolved objectively. They suggested, however, that conflict between certain "sub-interpretations" did appear capable of objective resolution. As a test they undertook to examine statements of Ramsdell and Hacker concerning the movement to reopen the African slave trade in the 1850's. Again their efforts produced negative results. Benson and Pressly admitted that they did not know whether differences in interpretations of the causes of the Civil War could ever be resolved objectively but thought that the most promising method lay in the use of "objective indexes" to attack differences between "subinterpretations." Three critics discussed the paper. David Donald of Columbia University questioned the choice of historians selected for examination, found the concept of "objective indexes" unclear, and thought the paper pointless and empty of content. David M. Potter of Yale University distinguished between long-range and short-range causes of the war and thought that the authors of the paper had not asked the right questions. T. Harry Williams of Louisiana State University commended the authors for their insistence on factual analysis but expressed skepticism of the whole effort to achieve historical synthesis by the objective methods of the social sciences.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>34</sup>The American Historical Review, LXII (April, 1957), 760.

## CHAPTER VII

### AIMS AND GOALS OF FIVE HISTORIANS

#### AND

### VALIDITY OF GROUPING

What then has been proved so far? What valid conclusions can be drawn? Has it yet been determined what these five men are trying to do? Has validity been shown for classifying them as some kind of group with some larger basis than they are all historians? Can a statement be made summarizing their common approach? Are their points proven? Until these questions are answered, it is useless to proceed to a determination of their success or failure and of ramifications for future historical research.

In the first place, has it yet been shown that Hofstadter, Elkins, McKittrick, Meyers and Benson represent a school? In Chapter I, interrelationships between the five were pointed to, and their mutual respect for and dependence on each other and on Hofstadter was emphasized. However, this remains relatively superficial and vague. Where, then, can a common ground be found? To refer to them as historians using interdisciplinary approaches is as unsatisfying an explanation and description as to merely refer to them as American historians. Although they emphasize the use of interdisciplinary approaches more than many past and current-day historians, this also says very little, for their methods, drawing from the fields of psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and literary criticism, are as different as night and day.



#### A. DISAGREEMENTS AND AGREEMENTS

In looking for points of disagreement among the men, the following quickly appear. Hofstadter would disagree with Benson about the need to completely throw out Brown's Beard. Rather, he finds that Brown raised several important structural questions. Elkins and McKittrick would also grant Brown more in his interpretation of Beard than would Benson. However all four agree that Brown was caught up in the same trap as was Beard. Elkins and McKittrick accept most of McDonald's work on Beard while Benson rejects most of it.

Hofstadter's United States history textbook, The United States published in 1957, disagrees to some extent with McKittrick's analysis of Andrew Johnson. Hofstadter sees the Radicals as a strongly organized block before Reconstruction began and then as the group primarily in control during Reconstruction. However, one must hesitate here, for after reading McKittrick's account six years after writing his textbook, Hofstadter may have changed his mind a bit.

Meyers would call the second quarter of the 19th century the Age of Jackson, while Benson feels that term is erroneous and that the Age of Egalitarianism should be used instead. Benson also indicates in Concepts of Jacksonian Democracy that he feels in a few instances that Meyers' interpretations of the Jacksonian Democracy can be questioned and are erroneous.

Surely, then, there must be other broader areas where disagreement exists. Hofstadter, Meyers, and Benson approach the study of Jackson and the era surrounding him in such different ways that it is extremely difficult to find areas of agreement or disagreement. In order to compare, there

must first be at least two like objects or areas or approaches. In this instance, the same subjects are handled on such different planes and approached at such different points that a distinct comparison as to agreement or disagreement is all but impossible. This applies to Hofstadter's interpretation of the Founding Fathers. His interpretation is not necessarily in opposition to that of Elkins and McKittrick--it is just different. However Elkins and McKittrick give a much softer view. And, again, the same is true of the different interpretations of the Turner thesis. All five agree it is not adequate but from there on it is difficult to make a comparison.

Actually, it is much easier to find the stated areas of agreement. All seem to accept Hofstadter's thesis, as stated in American Political Tradition, pointing to a common climate of American political opinion in opposition to the conflict school, emphasizing that in the United States, broad and deep agreement has existed upon the very issues which elsewhere have provided the fundamental bases of political conflict, and stressing that there is an essential unity of cultural and political tradition and a central faith in the aims and values of a capitalist culture. Major political traditions have had in common a belief in the sanctity of private property, in economic individualism, in the value of competition and the role of politics as a protector of the competitive world.

Elkins accepts Hofstadter's views of U. B. Phillips and agrees with Hofstadter's suggested format for a research in the area of slavery--writing from the standpoint of the slave with a background of modern cultural anthropology. Both Elkins and McKittrick recognize Hofstadter's

scholarship in his presentation of "Turner and the Frontier Myth" and accepts, as does Brown, the idea of the cities serving as a safety valve for the farmers. These two authors also integrate Hofstadter's destruction of the "myth of the happy yeoman" into their own discussion of the frontier.

Each one of these authors is careful to follow Hofstadter's cue, viewing each man studied in the context of the time in which he wrote, whether it be Turner or Beard or Phillips. Meyers accepts Hofstadter's classification of Leggett as a doctrinaire economic liberal and then suggests further clues as to his reception.

Benson quotes from and accepts Hofstadter's charge to historians to look to other disciplines to enlarge their conception of their own task. Benson also accepts Hofstadter's emphasis on the international market as a main cause of the agrarian crisis of the 1890's. Both Benson and Hofstadter find basically the same kind of ambiguity present in Beard's writings.

Meyers and Benson see the same validity in using New York state as a test case in the examination of Jacksonian democracy. Hofstadter gives much the same reasoning as do Elkins and McKittrick on the problem of the differences between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Obviously Elkins and McKittrick see eye to eye on most major points since they usually write together as a team.

Consequently, one would be forced to admit that these five men do have a great many more areas of agreement than disagreement. They agree basically on many of the important areas of American history. However,

they approach the study of these areas with quite different methods and handle the problems on varying planes. One notices that although there is an obvious radical difference in approach and interpretation, this difference is absent when discussing an understanding of basic concepts. It is accurate to assert that they differ much less with each other than with other historians not of the quintet.

Agreement or disagreement or a hazy conception of areas of comparison do not yet give real validity to grouping those men together. Subject matter is not a sound reason either, for the problems they attack certainly are too diverse to classify together. Therefore, the ideas of other historians will have to be considered here, paying little attention to these historians' final judgments, but rather looking for their interpretation and immediate reaction to what these men are attempting to do, dealing with each of the quintet separately and concentrating only on their published books.

B. HOFSTADTER (REVIEWERS' COMMENTS)

Development and Scope of Higher Education

In the few book reviews available, the only comments that merit any attention are, "fascinating information,"<sup>1</sup> interesting historical and philosophical review,"<sup>2</sup> "lucid and lively history."<sup>3</sup>

Academic Freedom

"As historians they demolish many cherished myths . . . and the authors make a fresh contribution of the highest scholarly order to intellectual history." "The institutional setting . . . is analyzed with unprecedented objectivity and acute insight."<sup>4</sup>

Sidney Hook, Professor of Philosophy at New York University, views this volume as "both analytical and informative," "a fascinating and richly documented tale," "written with perspective, balance and a sense for the nourishing forces in American life, . . . a creditable achievement."<sup>5</sup>

Milton Konvitz of Cornell sees the book as a "solid scholarly achievement . . . based on careful scholarship, . . . written in a literary

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<sup>1</sup>S. Barr, Review, New Republic, CXXVIII (January-July, 1953), 29.

<sup>2</sup>George Benson, Review, American Political Science Review, XXXVII (1953), 884.

<sup>3</sup>Fred B. Millett, Review, American Quarterly, VI (1954), 183.

<sup>4</sup>Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXIII (1956-57), 103.

<sup>5</sup>Sidney Hook, Review, New York Times, October 30, 1955, p. 6.

style . . . comprehensive and yet well-balanced."<sup>6</sup> H. H. Wilson of Princeton uses the words "brilliantly concise and perceptive."<sup>7</sup> Henry Gideonese, President of Brooklyn College calls it a "scholarly and balanced study."<sup>8</sup> Peter Odegard of the University of California refers to the historical foundations as "brilliantly set forth."<sup>9</sup> Charles Barker of Johns Hopkins finds it is "the first broad and scholarly study" which has "enriched the general subject enormously."<sup>10</sup> Logan Wilson of the University of Texas notes it is "a painstaking work of documentation, arrangement, and analysis."<sup>11</sup>

#### Social Darwinism

Frank Hankins of Smith College states, "It traces through quotation and paraphrase, the impact of evolutionism on social and ethical thought in this country."<sup>12</sup> Roy Billington of Northwestern finds, "This exciting volume . . . is the first full-length study of . . . the impact of Darwin on one field of American thought." Mr. Hofstadter's "skillful pen reduces these

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<sup>6</sup> Milton Konvitz, Review, Annals of the American Academy, CCCIV (March, 1956), 172.

<sup>7</sup> H. H. Wilson, Review, Nation, December 10, 1955, p. 513.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Gideonese, Review, New Leader, January 2, 1956, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Odegard, Review, American Political Science Review, L (1956), 527.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Barker, Review, American Historical Review, LXI (April, 1956), 650.

<sup>11</sup> Logan Wilson, Review, American Sociological Review, XXI (April, 1956), 233.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Hankins, Review, Annals of the American Academy, CCXXXVII (January, 1945), 229.

complex theories to crystal clarity." He shows "intelligent organization" and makes a "rich contribution."<sup>13</sup>

"A critical and discriminating study" are the terms used by one reviewer<sup>14</sup> while still another finds it "compact, lucid, informed, vigorous. He makes no concession to popular taste and if you are not prepared to struggle manfully with adult material, you had better not buy his book."<sup>15</sup>

John Turner of Lynchburg, Virginia makes the following analysis:

This book deals with the adaptation of Darwinian ideas to American social, economic and political thought. Recognizing that the biological concept of survival of the fittest was neutral as far as social ideologies were concerned, and that it was used to support whatever preconception its interpreters wanted it to support, Mr Hofstadter demonstrates how it was used, from the 1860's until 1890, to buttress rugged individualism and laissez-faire, how it was then employed to justify imperialistic nationalism; and how during World War I it virtually disappeared.

Sociologists, economists, religionists and philosophers as well as historians will find this book a valuable objective analysis. Communists, capitalists, New Dealers and what not, if they have axes to grind, may grind freely as they read.<sup>16</sup>

Bert Loewenberg of Sarah Lawrence College observes, "If ideas are truly weapons of change and implements of action, this volume could hardly fail to captivate a generation of scholars who seek to understand the one and direct the other." "Dr. Hofstadter essays to illustrate how social

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<sup>13</sup>Roy Billington, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXI (June-March, 1944-45), 458.

<sup>14</sup>John D. Lewis, Review, American Political Science Review, XXXVIII (August-December, 1944), 1252.

<sup>15</sup>Howard M. Jones, Review, New York Times Book Review, L (January-June, 1945), 19.

<sup>16</sup>John Mills Turner, Review, New England Quarterly, XVIII (1945), 124.

theories inferred from biology were reflected in human motivations and how the prevailing 'intellectual climate' provided an environment favorable to their acceptance."<sup>17</sup>

Floyd House, University of Virginia, views the book as "a contribution to intellectual history and still more specifically to the history of social thought in this country."<sup>18</sup>

American Political Tradition

"It is a brilliantly controversial and interpretative book; the facts of the American past are raised from the dead to demonstrate their meaning to contemporaries interested only in the past as a means of understanding the present . . . . easy to follow . . . brilliantly revisionist."<sup>19</sup> Such are the views of Francis Simkins of Louisiana State University.

Merrill Peterson of Brandeis looks at Hofstadter in the following manner:

Richard Hofstadter has managed the impossible: to make exciting the essential sameness and monotony of the American political tradition. Historians and critics of recent years engaged in redistributing the "usable" American past, have impressed the image of crisis and conflict of their own time on the political tradition . . . . As a result we have lost sight of the basic continuities in American political history. To correct this distortion, Hofstadter has written a series of brilliant studies in the ideology of American

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<sup>17</sup>Bert James Loewenberg, Review, American Historical Review, L (October-July, 1944-45), 820.

<sup>18</sup>Floyd N. House, Review, American Sociological Review, IX (December, 1944), 711.

<sup>19</sup>Francis B. Simkins, Review, Journal of Southern History, XV (1949), 105.



statesmanship," focusing attention on "the central faith" and tracing its "adaptation to various times and various interests."<sup>20</sup>

Earl Pomeroy of the University of Oregon finds Hofstadter "stimulating and informative throughout . . . neither doctrinaire nor partisan but sometimes a bit of the iconoclast . . . prone to sharp thought not novel judgments."<sup>21</sup> Charles Sydnor uses the phrases, "remarkably independent, bold, and original in interpretation." "He has expressed his ideas with vigor and verve."<sup>22</sup>

One reviewer discovers Hofstadter's central thesis as "a basic continuity to our political tradition regardless of the superficial intensity which has been displayed in the battle for votes." "The essays are brilliantly written, with telling phrases and epithet, and analyze our public figures, without the usual propensity for hero worship, in a refreshingly honest and critical appraisal." "By examining the past and present values and political beliefs, which have grown increasingly inadequate with the passage of time, much of the deadwood of sentimentality and wishful thinking has been cut down . . . ."<sup>23</sup>

Fred Cahill concedes to the book that "if it leads to a more complete investigation and through it a fuller understanding, it will have served an admirable purpose."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Merrill D. Peterson, New England Quarterly, XXIII (1950), 113.

<sup>21</sup> Earl S. Pomeroy, Review, Historian, XI-XII (Autumn, 1949), 103.

<sup>22</sup> Charles S. Sydnor, Review, South Atlantic Quarterly, IIL (1949), 612.

<sup>23</sup> John Stalker, Review, Survey, LXXXV (January, 1949), 53.

<sup>24</sup> Fred V. Cahill Jr., Review, Yale Review, XXXVIII (1948-49), 565.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., finds this book "witty and illuminating" and makes the following observation:

Mr. Hofstadter brings to this task the full apparatus of critical scholarship; but, more important, he brings a wide knowledge of politics and economic theory, a genuinely cultivated and reflective mind, a sensitive understanding of personal motives and dilemmas, and a deft literary style. His estimates are fresh and original, shaped by requirements neither of myth nor of debunking.<sup>25</sup>

"Dr. Hofstadter," according to Albert Huegeli of Concordia Teachers College, "contends that concern for property rights, regard for individual opportunity, and enlightened self-interest as the motivation for social progress have been the core of our political belief until the advent of the New Deal." Descriptive phrases used by this reviewer include "careful scholarship," "penetrating incisiveness," "style is bright and sharp, as an axe laid to the underbrush of legend," "smooth and clever."<sup>26</sup>

C. Vann Woodward observes that Hofstadter "is searching for 'a common ground, a unity of cultural and political tradition, upon which American civilization has stood.'" "His portraits are uniformly severe, analytical, and unsparing of imperfections in their subjects. It is a book without a hero."<sup>27</sup>

Francis Coker of Yale University observes that "the author's central theme is that we have been wrong in our traditional appraisals because we have not acknowledged that our leaders acted accordingly to wrong

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<sup>25</sup> Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Review, American Historical Review, LIV (April, 1949), 612.

<sup>26</sup> Albert G. Huegeli, Review, American Political Science Review, IIII (1948), 1214.

<sup>27</sup> C. Vann Woodward, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXV (1948-49), 681.

assumptions about man and society or because we have not understood that their assumptions were wrong." He refers to Hofstadter's book as "scholarly, highly readable."<sup>28</sup>

Other reviewers use such terms as "shrewd insight," "new interpretation,"<sup>29</sup> "a thoughtful, penetrating controversial study,"<sup>30</sup> "shrewd, bold, honest, and on occasion, brilliantly illuminating."<sup>31</sup> Daniel Aaron makes the following notation:

A brilliantly interpretive synthesis of historical scholarship, it bears the imprint of an original and an acute intelligence . . . . an excellent writer with a gift for pungent expression . . . a historian with an axe to grind . . . . He argues that the struggle between the various parties and party leaders from Jefferson's day until our own did not involve any irreconcilable differences . . . . The greatest political leaders have been ambitious men who aimed at their goals long before they obtained them. They have been opportunistic, adroit, and crafty and they have never outraged the prejudices of their constituencies. The failures or near failures among them either lacked intelligence (Bryan) or neglected to adjust their theories and programs to brute necessities (Calhoun and Hoover).<sup>32</sup>

One of Hofstadter's critics, Eliot Janeway, negatively asserts, "The book is superficial by serious intellectual standards and supercilious by realistic political standards," and calls him an "avowed liberal."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Francis W. Coker, Review, Annals of the American Academy, CCLXIV (July, 1949), 147.

<sup>29</sup> Review, School and Society, LXVIII (September, 1948), 176.

<sup>30</sup> John H. Berthel, Review, Library Journal, LXXVIII (September, 1948), 1188.

<sup>31</sup> Gerald W. Johnson, Review, New York Times, September 19, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Aaron, Review, American Quarterly, I (Spring, 1949), 94.

<sup>33</sup> Eliot Janeway, Review, Saturday Review of Literature, October 9, 1948, p. 19.

Perry Miller finds it "able, witty, urbane . . . a triumph of humane letters." He views Hofstadter as "an outstandingly brilliant scholar" and his thesis "is an index of the times; it is what he is compelled to write and his book has vitality because he is vitally concerned."<sup>34</sup>

Max Lerner views Hofstadter as a "young American of wide reading and considerable courage."<sup>35</sup> From Avery Craven comes the observations that American Political Tradition is an "interesting and provocative work," with a penetrating analysis.<sup>36</sup>

#### Age of Reform

Current History reviews this book with the following statement.

"With new insights, a fresh perspective is given to an area much discussed. Old stereotypes are destroyed and the actual motivations, aims and accomplishments of the Progressives and the Populists are examined anew."<sup>37</sup> From Nation comes this statement:

He presents the Progressive movement as essentially a revolt against the organization which inevitably accompanied modern technology. The Progressives were not proposing a return to a simpler society. They sought instead to retain individualistic values which this organizational revolution was destroying. They developed governmental regulation as a counter-balance to business power but did not solve the problem of preserving political democracy.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Perry Miller, Review, Nation, October 16, 1948, p. 438.

<sup>35</sup> Max Lerner, Review, New Republic, December 6, 1948, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> Avery Craven, Review, New York Herald Tribune Book Review, September 19, 1948, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Review, Current History, XXIX (November, 1955), 320.

<sup>38</sup> Review, Nation, January 21, 1956, p. 57.

According to the New Yorker, this book "makes ample use of David Riesman's dialectic."<sup>39</sup> Edward Kirkland of Bowdoin College and President of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association observes "new approaches . . . tautness and cogency of its analysis . . . understanding, pursued with integrity."<sup>40</sup> A "master of creative synthesis" who writes with "an empathetic insight" is the interpretation of John Roche of Brandeis.<sup>41</sup>

William Brewer, editor of the Journal of Negro History finds the following: This is an account of the passion and zeal for reform in America during the span of time from 1890-1940. Here pass through critical analysis and review the various schemes and organization of reform which were in a period of change and transition fraught with many economic, industrial and political changes.

. . . . .  
Hofstadter ventures into the power and prestige of American life while reflecting a determination to use some of the techniques of anthropology and social psychology to understand the "agrarian myth" which long remained sacred in America. This work is "urban centered" and, therefore, finds much in Populism wanting. The author, through masterly interpretations, uses intellectual history to portray not only the evident nostalgia for the past during the period surveyed, but the new departures which were undertaken and others that were recommended. Nothing in reform of the half century from 1890-1940 escapes Hofstadter's scrutiny. He includes the brilliant suggestions of scholars and writers with those of politicians and statesmen while evaluating all with keener penetration and verve than the orthodox historian employs. Here are also new points of view in showing that Turner's thesis of the frontier was not the too much presumed safety-valve of the country as the city which provided the market for rural abundance.<sup>42</sup>

George Mowry, UCLA, has formed a similar opinion:

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<sup>39</sup>Review, New Yorker, November 19, 1955, p. 224.

<sup>40</sup>Edward Kirkland, Review, American Historical Review, LXI (April, 1956), 667.

<sup>41</sup>John P. Roche, Review, American Political Science Review, L (September, 1956), 862.

<sup>42</sup>W. M. Brewer, Review, Journal of Negro History, XL-IXL (1955-56), 166.

a study of political thinking and political moods and is characterized by perceptive insights, analyses, and conclusions-- some, . . . of striking originality and great significance for the reinterpretation of the three phases of the era of reform and the relationship of each to the other.

. . . . .  
Progressivism was primarily an urban movement which flourished in prosperity and was supported by the middle classes. Hofstadter advances the interesting theory that much of the leadership of the Progressive movement came from men who were victims of a status revolution . . . . The author's concern for status underlines his knowledge and use of sociological concepts in what is essentially a work of history. His command of modern developments in economic theory is called into use also. Few historians move across the boundaries from one social science to another with the ease this author does . . . . provocative . . . penetrating insight, balance, and maturity . . . .<sup>43</sup>

The Mississippi Valley Historical Review discovers "sparkling new viewpoints, insightful remarks." "In short, the volume is a brilliant fray into the psychology of reform groups and as such leans heavily upon the techniques and sometimes the vocabulary of social anthropology and social psychology."<sup>44</sup>

David Fellman, University of Wisconsin, interprets Age of Reform in the following manner:

The great Jeffersonian agrarian myth, so powerfully reinforced by Frederick Jackson Turner and the frontier romanticists, and still deeply entrenched in the American public mind, is critically dissected in this sophisticated and singularly brilliant book by one of our rising and most gifted historians.

. . . . .  
It is intellectual history of a very high order. . . . Hofstadter writes in the context of modern psychological and sociological insights, drawing attention to the significance of public moods, myths and nostalgia, psychic satisfactions, status problems, group pressures and administrative organization.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>George E. Mowry, Review, Progressive, XIX (December, 1955), 38.

<sup>44</sup>Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIIIIL (1955-56), 768.

<sup>45</sup>David Fellman, Review, New Republic, October 24, 1955, p. 20.

Arthur Ekirch, American University, finds Hofstadter reminding his readers that they have to live in this world and not in the world of a past golden age.<sup>46</sup> "Magnificent. . . insights . . . the learning is impressive without being pretentious. . . .Richard Hofstadter approached his subject without either the self-hatred of remorseful radicals or the Manicheanism of doctrinaire reformers. Liberal America has produced its own astute but sympathetic critic," are a few of the observations of Arthur Mann of Smith.<sup>47</sup>

D. W. Brogan, Cambridge, considers the book "a work of original scholarship . . . also a work of great topical interest . . . , exciting."<sup>48</sup> Another reviewer observes "a book of rich insights . . . succession of challenging new interpretations" and also makes the following observation:

. . . thought provoking book, one that helps the reader to cut through the usual stereotypes in thinking about historical causation and to try to see connection between forces and events in new and more meaningful ways.<sup>49</sup>

In the American Quarterly appear such phrases as "academic historian" and "interpretative insight." "Here the author's gift of psychological insight, his perception into the connections between reform and aggressive nationalism, and between both and the inner tensions of society, come

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<sup>46</sup> Arthur A. Ekirch Jr., Review, Journal of Southern History, XXII (1956), 255.

<sup>47</sup> Arthur Mann, Review, New Leader, January 30, 1956, p. 26.

<sup>48</sup> D. W. Brogan, Review, New York Times, October 16, 1955, p. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Robert K. Carr, Review, New York Herald Tribune Book Review, October 30, 1955, p. 10.

into play."<sup>50</sup> From another source, "new interpretations of American reform" are noted as significant as is the view that "these several new emphases differ appreciably from commonly-held ideas and from recent interpretations."<sup>51</sup>

C. ELKINS (REVIEWERS' COMMENTS)

Slavery

Arnold Sio of Colgate University, a sociologist, regards this book as "an attempt to reformulate and refocus the discussion of slavery in the American South, to move it from the 'old debate' as to its justices and injustices to 'new viewpoints' of slavery as a problem in American industrial and intellectual life." Sio feels that Elkins tries to show that the pattern of slavery in the American South produced Sambo, a distinct personality type not found in Latin America. The genesis is institutional--in the "absolute power" of the slave master in a "closed system of slavery." That this book "may well mark a new orientation to slavery in the United States as well as the beginnings of a comparative sociology of slavery" seems quite possible to Sio.<sup>52</sup>

W. M. Brewer, editor of the Journal of Negro History perceives that slavery "needs a century of continuing exploration and rewriting and

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<sup>50</sup> Review, American Quarterly, IX (1957), 461

<sup>51</sup> Review, United States Quarterly Book Review, XI (December, 1955), 456.

<sup>52</sup> Arnold A. Sio, Review, American Sociological Review, XXV (October, 1960), 757.



Elkins has brilliantly pointed the way."<sup>53</sup> Henry Simms of Ohio State University summarizes, "In comparing the institution of slavery in North America and Latin America, Elkins concludes that under the beneficent influence of the crown and church, the institution was less rigid in legal character and hence in its practical operations in Latin America."<sup>54</sup>

Elkins presents his subject by delving into the subtleties of the nature of slavery as an institution and its impact upon other institutions, according to Frank Tannerbaum as he presents the following observations: "This is an attempt to change the old debate about slavery in the United States and move the argument from issues of good and evil, right and wrong" to certain questions in which Elkins "is concerned with why the Negro, slave or freed, failed to find a niche in the institutional structure of the South and having no place within Southern institutional life, what were the possibilities for dealing with the difficulties at hand." This book "opens up new ways of looking at the place of slavery in American history, as a part of the social, economic, political and cultural history of the United States and not just of the Negro."<sup>55</sup>

Harvey Wish of Western Reserve University concentrates his attention on a different area:

He [Elkins] believes that U. B. Phillips for all his racism was correct in depicting the slave as childlike, as a Sambo type and

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<sup>53</sup>W. M. Brewer, Review, Journal of Negro History, VI (1960), 134.

<sup>54</sup>Henry H. Simms, Review, Annals of the American Academy, CCCXXIX (May, 1960), 201.

<sup>55</sup>Frank Tannenbaum, Review, Journal of Southern History, XXVI (1960), 92.

infantilism grew out of the nature of the peculiar institution in this country.

.....  
The author draws heavily upon social psychology, particularly the recent studies of changing human behavior in the German concentration camps. He enlarges on an analogy between American slavery and the Nazi concentration camp system.

.....  
Dr. Elkins offers a stimulating analysis and a method of interdisciplinary cooperation. . . . the application of social psychology.<sup>56</sup>

John Lydenburg in The American Quarterly emphasizes, "Elkins bases his new approach primarily on a consideration of the effects of democracy and 'unopposed capitalism' upon early 19th Century America," and he terms it a "fresh exciting book."<sup>57</sup> In another instance in the same periodical the following summary appears:

This book is an attempt to show why American Negro slavery was different from any other slave system and why--despite physical conditions relatively milder than those in slave cultures elsewhere--its impact on Negro personality was so severe and lasting.<sup>58</sup>

The London Times in addition to referring to Elkins' "brilliant argument" and to his book as a "bold, original and often profound book," at times reckless but "we need a little recklessness in modern historiography and sociology," makes this statement:

Elkins wants to make it a new debate, not a simple debate over the rightness or wrongness of slavery, over the thesis of an "aggressive slavocracy" against "abolitionist fanatics" . . . . Dr. Elkins sympathies are with Professor Nevins and still more with Professor Stamp."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Harvey Wish, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, IIII (1960-61), 319.

<sup>57</sup>John Lydenburg, Review, American Quarterly, XII (1960), 109.

<sup>58</sup>Review, American Quarterly, IVL (1959-60), 591.

<sup>59</sup>Review, The Times, (London), March 25, 1960, p. 190.

Referring to Slavery as "one of the most exciting and stimulating books in American institutional and intellectual life," John Ward, Professor of American History at Princeton, points to this view:

The three approaches Mr. Elkins suggests are to study slavery by comparing its forms in the different cultures of North and South America, to consider the effect of slavery on the personality of the Negro from the perspective of modern thought and experience, and to understand the guilt of antebellum Northern intellectuals not as a response to the moral outrage of slavery but as a problem in the divorce between intellect and social institutions.<sup>60</sup>

Sociologist, Robert Gordon of the University of Chicago entitles his review, "Slavery and the Comparative Study of Social Structure."

Several statements from his review emphasize his sociological approach:

Elkins seeks the answer in a comparative study of the institutions of the two Americas.

.....  
Again, the study of institutional contexts and the comparative method prove illuminating . . . . The argument at this point is bolstered by a knowledgeable consideration of theories of personality dynamics. Whatever one's attitude toward the theories in question, the relevance of the behavioral evidence to the actual historical event of slavery is striking.

.....  
. . . Elkins' work offers the sociologist an unusual opportunity to develop the theories of comparative institutions and societies. For, while the work itself draws upon current theories in social science to explain particular cases, the author does not unify the cases within a single general theory.

.....  
Elkins' book is recommended to the sociologist as a well-equipped laboratory for experimentation with the concept of status-set. The simplicity of the concept invites its application to exactly this sort of material. It certainly offers one means of employing for sociological purposes a wealth of historical material unsuited to other modern techniques, for its use depends upon the very information which is likely to be accessible to historical research.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Johns W. Ward, Review, American Scholar, XXX (1960-61), 440.

<sup>61</sup> Robert A. Gordon, Review, American Journal of Sociology, LXVI (September, 1960), 184.

D. MCKITRICK (REVIEWERS' COMMENTS)

Andrew Johnson

A superbly written reinterpretation which challenges the conventional picture of Johnson as a misunderstood statesman and reveals instead a small-minded vindictive man whose intractability destroyed the many possibilities of compromise between President and Congress.<sup>62</sup>

McKittrick does not attempt to make Radical Reconstruction more attractive but he does make it more understandable. He does not try to make Johnson a villain, but he does make it impossible to think of him as an innocent victim. He does not approve the impeachment of Johnson but he does prove that Johnson was partly to blame for his plight.

. . . . .  
This book is a contribution of prime importance to the reviving study of the Reconstruction period. Among its merits are its originality in reshaping old problems, its imaginative use of analogy and comparative history, and its disciplined respect for the chronological order of events, ideas, hopes and despairs.<sup>63</sup>

Such is the reasoning of C. Vann Woodward in two different reviews written on this book. Edgar Tappin of the University of Akron seems to share Woodward's views for in his words, McKittrick "demolished a myth." He refers to it as a "groundbreaking study," one that should be "required reading for all teachers hobbled by revisionist--imbued textbooks."<sup>64</sup> T. Harry Williams, though not as enthusiastic does term it a "vigorous book" and makes this statement, "The analysis of the President is devastating. Johnson, once considered a villain and later elevated to a hero,

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<sup>62</sup> Review, American Quarterly, XII (1960), 219.  
<sup>63</sup> C. Vann Woodward, Review, New York Times Book Review, September 25, 1960, p. 3.  
<sup>64</sup> Edgar Tappin, Review, Journal of Negro History, VI (1960), 271-74.

is apparently about to enter another cycle of interpretation in which he will appear as an incompetent."<sup>65</sup>

"A scholarly, heavily documented and fair-minded work" is the manner Willard Heaps of the United Nations Library in New York City considers this book adding that McKitrick "completely debunks the traditional picture of Johnson as a misunderstood statesman."<sup>66</sup> David Donald, for once, takes a positive approach by noting that "now, in a brilliant and important book, McKitrick fundamentally challenges this prevailing view." He adds that McKitrick brings to the study "a thorough grounding in political science, sociology, and psychology. No partisan, he writes with compassion for all the participants in the Reconstruction tragedy and with understanding of the social and institutional framework within which they operated." Finally he finds it "an extremely able and provocative monograph" that will do much "to reshape our thinking about the entire controversial Reconstruction story."<sup>67</sup>

Bernard Weislarger of the University of Chicago uses these descriptive words-- "unusual," "creative," "provocative," "provoking." He also shows a somewhat different understanding of McKitrick:

When the author interrupts his narrative, he likes to negotiate in the currency of social psychology. He discusses ritual symbols of surrender, he constructs "models" of reconciliation and tests them

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<sup>65</sup>T. Harry Williams, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, III (1960-61), 518.

<sup>66</sup>Willard A. Heaps, Review, Library Journal, LXXXV (August, 1960), 2786.

<sup>67</sup>David Donald, Review, New York Herald Tribune Book Review, September 25, 1960, p. 6.

against actualities . . . . While his day-to-day account of events is impeccably history . . . . he clearly desires to go beyond the "facts" to use the construction and hypotheses of the social sciences in order to unlock those historical secrets still unravished by documentary research.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Bernard A. Weislarger, Review, American Historical Review, LXVI (April, 1961), 658.

E. MEYERS (REVIEWERS' COMMENTS)

Jacksonian Persuasion

Cecelia Kenyon of Smith College reads Meyers' thesis in the following manner:

The Jacksonians were aware of the social implications of the economic changes in which they were involved and their reaction was ambivalent. They could not resist the attractions of the new economy of corporations, credit and financial manipulation but neither could they abandon their image of the Old Republic, and that image was derived from the Jeffersonian idyll of a nation of yeoman farmers. The old and new were in conflict and neither could be totally rejected. The rhetoric of the Jacksonians appealed to the people's loyalty to the old order and mollified their conscience by fixing the guilt for the evils of the new order on Biddle's Bank. It did not stop them from plunging into the new order with vigor and zest.

She adds these descriptive phrases: "Its analysis is sustained, perceptive, precise . . . subtlety of content."<sup>69</sup>

As Richard Longaker, Kenyon College, sees it, "Meyers breaks with the traditional political and social analysis favoring instead an evaluation of the Jacksonian movement as 'persuasion' which he describes as an emotional commitment to values." Longaker finds Meyers "reversing the usual interpretation of Jacksonism as the party of the future, . . . views it largely as a conservative movement in an era of rapid and uncontrollable economic change." It is "of high literary quality and subtle insight" and "the most imaginative commentary on the Jacksonian period in recent years."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Cecelia Kenyon, Review, American Political Science Review, LIII (1959), 538.

<sup>70</sup>Richard P. Longaker, Review, Annals of the American Academy, CCCVIII (July, 1958), 164.

"A mystical melange of psychology, sociology, and literary criticism. . . . myths, symbols, and other instances of 'elusive psychological fact,'" are the observations of New York City's Thomas Govan.<sup>71</sup> Hofstadter finds it "a major study not only in Jacksonian democracy but also in the art of analyzing political communications."<sup>72</sup> According to Charles G. Sellers, Jr., "For the political historian, Mr. Meyers offers a way of taking political rhetoric seriously without taking it at face value. For the intellectual historian, he shows how to extract from political behavior the social values of a whole people. . . . Meyers has brilliantly recast the framework within which the discussion must proceed."<sup>73</sup>

As perceived by Harvey Wish of Western Reserve, Meyers "replaces the class-interest approach with an intellectual analysis of the outlook of representative Jacksonians from the President down. . . . Fundamentally he develops the thesis that Jacksonianism is moralistic in emphasis rather than economic despite the attack on the Monster Bank." His essay is "unique for its varied methods used."<sup>74</sup>

"Meyers technique," as seen by Robert Riegel of Dartmouth, "Stresses sampling rather than complete coverage and his organization is intriguingly

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<sup>71</sup>Thomas P. Govan, Review, Journal of Southern History, XXIV (1958), 114.

<sup>72</sup>Review, American Historical Review, LXII (October, 1957), xxxiv.

<sup>73</sup>Charles G. Sellers Jr., Review, American Historical Review, LXIII (April, 1957), 700.

<sup>74</sup>Harvey, Review, Political Science Quarterly, LXXIII(March, 1958), 155.



unusual. . . . Meyers' book illustrates a current trend in American historical writing. Materials and techniques of the other disciplines are used intelligently. . . . A definite philosophic-psychological approach is apparent, accompanied by considerable subtlety of thought and wording."<sup>75</sup>

"Politics, in Mr. Meyers' hands, becomes a public drama in which the emotional life of the society finds expression," according to John W. Ward of Princeton:

If, from our perspective, we see the Jacksonian period most importantly as a phase, in Richard Hofstadter's description, in the expansion of liberated capitalism, there may be some justification for this concentration on figures and moments. . . .

. . . .  
If, as Henry Nash Smith recently suggested in the American Quarterly, American Studies is to be conceived "as a collaboration among men working from within existing academic disciplines but attempting to widen the boundaries imposed by conventional methods of inquiry," then Marvin Meyers' book is to be added to a growing list of books which extend the range of our perception and the richness of our field of vision.<sup>76</sup>

William Chambers of Washington University finds this book a "sensitive, intelligent reformulation,"<sup>77</sup> while Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., views it in this manner:

There have heretofore been two main tendencies in the interpretation of Jacksonian democracy. The older has supposed that a real conflict took place among economic interest groups, however variously those groups might be interpreted. The more recent sees very little conflict at all, and regards the politics of the times as essentially a sham battle; in its more extreme formulations, indeed, this school finds it difficult to distinguish the Jacksonians from the Whigs.

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<sup>75</sup>Robert E. Riegel, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VII (1957-58), 730-31.

<sup>76</sup>John W. Ward, Review, American Quarterly, IX (1957), 464.

<sup>77</sup>William N. Chambers, Review, New England Quarterly, XXXI (1958), 548.

Mr. Meyers, in his brilliant essay, finds both tendencies of interpretation inadequate. He dismisses the interest-group interpretation on the ground that "no general and simple class differences appear in party preferences." Yet he finds the thesis that the parties were "fraternal twins devoted to the advancement of slightly varying business interests" insufficient to explain the evident tension of the day. Instead, he proposes another and more inclusive reading of Jacksonian democracy and defends it by a close and imaginative analysis of the imagery and rhetoric in which the Jacksonians set forth their position.

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What Mr. Meyers has thus undertaken is a study of the Jacksonian mystique, and he has done this with great skill and sensitivity.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Review, Historian, XX (1957-58), 366.

F. BENSON (REVIEWERS' COMMENTS)

Concept of Jacksonian Democracy

Ray Nichols of the University of Pennsylvania has this to say, "This study reveals more clearly than anything I have yet seen what concepts and methods we must use if we are to lift political history out of the realm of the unreal and the imperceptive. It shows how much we can gain from the behavioral sciences. . . . Benson is to be congratulated on opening a laboratory door."<sup>79</sup>

Turner and Beard

Oscar Handlin refers to this book as "stimulating,"<sup>80</sup> but Cushing Strout, California Institute of Technology, makes a deeper analysis.

This book comes from a historian acquainted with the behavioral sciences and anxious "to adopt to historiography procedures developed in other disciplines." . . . This is not an intellectual history of Turner and Beard, nor is it a substantive criticism of the body of their work. It is instead a series of essays on the intellectual content of Turner's frontier theory and the methodological errors of Beard and his critics on the making of the Constitution.

. . . . .  
Benson argues for the greater plausibility in principle of a socio-cultural analysis, related to but not exhausted by economic consideration.<sup>81</sup>

Merchants, Farmers, and Railroads

As William Kunstler in the Annals of the American Academy observes, "The bulk of Mr. Benson's book is devoted to a study of the organized

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<sup>79</sup>Roy Nichols, Review, Journal of Southern History, XXVIII (November, 1961), 539.

<sup>80</sup>Oscar Handlin, Review, American Historical Review, LXVII (October, 1961), 147-48.

<sup>81</sup>Cushing Strout, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, IIII (1960-61), 736-37.

reaction that arose to combat the harmful effects of the great struggles of the railroad financier that reached their peak in the 1870's"<sup>82</sup>

Ralph Hidy of New York University emphasizes another point: "Benson presents in this study of New York pressure politics a decided reaction against the tendency of historians for several years to emphasize the role of western farmers in forwarding the regulation of railroads up to 1887."<sup>83</sup>

The American Political Science Review makes some interesting statements: "This is a significant addition to the literature on the movement for railroad regulation in this country. . . . Its theme is that the merchants and farmers of the Empire State, rather than the agrarians of the West, took the lead in this important movement."<sup>84</sup>

Now, after examining the comments of numerous rather eminent historians, political scientists, educators, and even a few sociologists, perhaps some sort of tentative conclusion can finally be drawn. What similarities exist between these five men as evidence in the preceding remarks and what qualities, concepts, or approaches are shown in the writings of these five that may not appear in the writings of other historians, even though better known and more prominent? No valid conclusion can be drawn on this evidence alone, but at least it can be entered as evidence!

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<sup>82</sup>William Kunstler, Review, Annals of the American Academy, CCCIV (May, 1956), 160.

<sup>83</sup>Ralph Hidy, Review, American Historical Review, LXI (1955-56), 742.

<sup>84</sup>Review, American Political Science Review, L (September, 1956), 888.

The interpretations as to content and thesis shown in the previous pages seem to be very much alike and fairly consistent. The consideration here is not whether these five men are criticized or praised but how others view them generally and what stands out specifically that bears light on the question of what these five men have tried to do.

In examining Hofstadter's reviews, the often-used adjectives of scholarly, intellectual, academic, brilliant, analytic, informative, thoughtful, provocative, only reaffirm the view already taken--that Hofstadter has every right to be seriously considered. But any serious work usually evokes these comments. Possibly more important are the constant use of adjectives such as fascinating, stimulating, challenging, vigorous, honest, illuminating, witty, smooth, clever, shrewd, interesting, thought-provoking, magnificent. However, in ascertaining a difference from previous works, the words, bold, original, critical, fresh, penetrating, courageous, controversial, balance, insight, stand out with more worth. Finally, to really complete the picture, the following phrases and words are extremely important: emphatic insight, new insights, interpretative insight, psychological insight, rich insights, new approaches, fresh perspective, new interpretations, masterly interpretations, reinterpretation, sparkling new viewpoints, the vocabulary and techniques of social anthropology and social psychology, striking originality, intellectual history, history of social thought, interpretative, revisionist. This must be meshed with the frequent referral to the use of other disciplines--philosophy, sociology, economics, religion, psychology--the emphasis on an institutional setting,

the frequent mention of the demolishing of cherished myths and stereotypes. According to these historians then, Hofstadter always has something very new to say, and what he does say has the effect of tearing at old solutions, accepted theories, myths and stereotypes. He shows amazing insight and his interpretations often in an institutional vein are new, but this insight does not come from his background as an historian--it comes from an understanding of and continuous use of the tools and ideas of other disciplines. What Hofstadter produces is new and it is new because he has applied different methods and approaches to old problems than are commonly used by historians. George Mowry said it simply, "Few historians move across the boundaries from one social science to another with the ease this author does."<sup>85</sup> Or as David Fellman interprets, "Hofstadter writes in the context of modern psychological and sociological insights."<sup>86</sup>

What about Stanley Elkins? He only deals in his book with one subject, but reviewers find this writing brilliant, profound, fresh, exciting, bold, original, reckless, stimulating. Certain phrases used clarify even further: new orientation; from an old debate to new viewpoints; uses theories of personality dynamics; contributes to sociological theory; a method of interdisciplinary cooperation; draws upon social psychology; new ways of looking at things as a part of social, economic, political, and cultural history; reformulates and rediscusses; institutional approach; beginnings of a comparative sociology of slavery.

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<sup>85</sup>Mowry, loc. cit.

<sup>86</sup>Fellman, loc. cit.

Here again is the emphasis on the new--the new interpretation, the new approach with emphasis on the the constitutional setting made possible by an entirely different manner of looking at and dealing with an historical problem by means of interdisciplinary cooperation and understanding.

Erick McKittrick's reviewers talk in the same vein. They, too, make such references as originality, scholarly, vigorous, brilliant, creative, unusual, provocative, a reinterpretation, and add such ideas as, superbly written, a challenging of the prevailing view, an understanding of the social and institutional framework, negotiating in the current of social psychology, a debunking of the traditional picture, reshaping old problems, demolishing a myth, a groundbreaking study, imaginative use of analogy and comparative history, a thorough grounding in political science, sociology and psychology. Thus, here again is an historian who has brought to the study of one area of history, a new interpretation made possible by his background in other disciplines. He, too, often works within an institutional system; he, too, has broken the ground for reinterpretations of other areas; he, too, has demolished an old myth.

Reviewers of Marvin Meyers' book emphasize his subtle insight, his skill, his sensitivity, his brilliance, his perception, his imaginative commentary. They find this essay unique for the various methods used, reversing the usual interpretation, a milange of psychology, sociology, and literary criticism, breaking with the traditional political and social analysis, of high literary quality. Robert Riegel puts his finger on it in this manner: "Meyers' book illustrates a current trend in

American historical writing. Materials and techniques of the other disciplines are used intelligently. . . . A definite philosophic-psychological approach is apparent. . . .<sup>87</sup> Meyers, then, has achieved a new, yet scholarly, interpretation of one area of American history and what has impressed the critics are the methods and approaches (borrowed from other disciplines) which he uses.

Finally, Lee Benson, no exception to the other four, is reviewed in much the same manner. Although few reviews are available, those that do consider him find him stimulating, acquainted with the behavioral sciences and intent on adopting their methods of historiography, opening new laboratory doors. Benson is the most methodological of the five and perhaps arrives at some of the most unusual interpretations.

Differences between these five men are obvious, but so are the similarities and it is with the latter that this thesis is concerned. All five men, in a serious, scholarly, academic fashion, have arrived at very new interpretations of different areas of American history. In their interpretations, they emphasize institutional setting; they show deep and subtle insight and understanding; they walk where few before them have ventured; they always challenge and often destroy old myths and stereotypes. According to their reviewers, they seem to be able to do this because they have broken the bonds of traditional historical research methods and reached out to other disciplines for understanding, for ideas, for approaches, for answers, to a far greater extent than has been usual.

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<sup>87</sup>Riegel, loc. cit.



Knowing what other men feel these five men are attempting to do, however, does not quite complete the picture. For a final answer, the question, "What are you trying to do?" should be addressed to Hofstadter, Elkins, McKittrick, Meyers, and Benson. There seems to be no reason why they cannot be taken at their word and after all, they know best; their evidence may be the most valid. This may have the effect, too, of answering another persistent question, "Why"--why are they doing what they are doing?

C. AUTHORS' STATEMENTS OF AIMS

Richard Hofstadter in Development and Scope of Higher Education, in his own words, endeavors "to relate some of the broad developments of higher education to the background of which they were a part," to determine what "it has meant to American society and what American society has done for it."<sup>88</sup> ". . . if thoughtful citizens are to be concerned about the financial well-being of higher education, they must believe in its goals and methods."<sup>89</sup> In other words, Hofstadter is writing for the public with an express purpose of convincing this public of an immediate problem and exhorting it to immediate action.

In Academic Freedom in the Age of the College, Hofstadter intends to show "what freedom has meant to successive generations of academic men, to what extent they have achieved it, and what factors in academic life itself, as well as in American culture at large, have created and sustained it."<sup>90</sup> This was done with the hope that "an enlargement of understanding will in the end be an enlargement of freedom."<sup>91</sup> Hofstadter expresses his "wider" purpose as follows:

The breaking of the American union and the resort to war is perhaps the best instance in our history of the principle that societies that imagine themselves unable to meet the costs of free discussion are likely to be presented with a much more exorbitant bill.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Hofstadter, Development and Scope, p. viii.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>90</sup> Hofstadter, Academic Freedom, p. v.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.      <sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

American Political Traditions was written because Hofstadter felt,

the need for a reinterpretation of our political traditions which emphasizes the common climate of American opinion. The existence of such a climate of opinion has been much obscured by the tendency to place political conflict in the foreground of history. . . . In these pages I have tried, without neglecting significant conflicts, to keep sight of the central faith and to trace its adaptation to varying times and various interests.

. . . . .  
Finally, I have no desire to add to a literature of hero-worship and national self-congratulation which is already large. It seems to me to be less important to estimate how great our public men have been than to analyze their historical roles.<sup>93</sup>

In Age of Reform, Hofstadter wishes that his "observations will be taken as a prelude and a spur to further studies of American reform movements and not as an attempt to render a final judgment."<sup>94</sup> In "Manifest Destiny and the Philippines," Hofstadter attempts a new approach to the study of the causes of the Spanish-American War and the annexation of the Philippines by finding an explanation in terms of social psychology--making a preliminary sketch of a possible explanatory method.<sup>95</sup> Hofstadter's discussion of U. B. Phillips ends with a challenge for scholars to study slavery and the Old South from viewpoints of cultural anthropology and social psychology.<sup>96</sup>

Stanley Elkins in Slavery takes Hofstadter's challenge but suggests that "the present study is more properly a 'proposal.' It proposes that certain kinds of questions be asked in future studies of the subject

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<sup>93</sup> Hofstadter, American Political Tradition, pp. vii-ix.

<sup>94</sup> Hofstadter, Age of Reform, p. 22.

<sup>95</sup> Hofstadter, "Manifest Destiny," p. 173.

<sup>96</sup> Hofstadter, "U. B. Phillips," p. 124.

that have not been asked in previous ones. . . . I also recognize that even with my own questions I have done no more than sketch in a beginning."<sup>97</sup> He emphasizes that he wishes to use a study of slavery to illustrate how new approaches might be used in the study of history.

Elkins has a higher concern, however:

How a person thinks about Negro slavery historically makes a great deal of difference here and now; it tends to locate him morally in relation to a whole range of very immediate political, social, and philosophical issues which in some way refer back to slavery.<sup>98</sup>

In their essays on Turner's frontier thesis, Elkins and McKittrick indicate that instead of approaching Turner on his own terms, they intend to handle him in a new manner.<sup>99</sup> Erick McKittrick, as previously noted, stated that in Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, he wished to challenge the prevailing views and present a new interpretation of Andrew Johnson.<sup>100</sup> In his article on corruption, he is suggesting a new way to investigate the life-study of a machine by using analytical tools appropriated elsewhere.<sup>101</sup> Marvin Meyers talks of a new emphasis in the approach to the study of Jacksonian Democracy.

Lee Benson, in Common Frontiers essays on ways that the methods of other disciplines might be used to study problems of history. He contends that these methods are a prerequisite in order for history

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<sup>97</sup>Elkins, Slavery, p. 224.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Elkins and McKittrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier, Part I," p. 330.

<sup>100</sup>McKittrick, Andrew Johnson, p. 14.

<sup>101</sup>McKittrick, "The Study of Corruption," p. 513.

to keep up with recent developments in its own and in related fields.<sup>102</sup> Concept of Jacksonian Democracy is part of "an exploratory [*italics mine*] study designed to adopt to historiography procedures developed in other disciplines."<sup>103</sup> In the end, he proposes and urges additional research to answer some of the questions he has raised. He uses Turner and Beard in much the same manner--as a study of method--and here, too he ventures a tentative appraisal for further thought and research. The paper prepared by Pressly and Benson merely raises some questions as how best to approach a study of the causes of the Civil War. In another article about the Civil War, Benson makes some statements that can be applied more generally than just in terms of this one problem:

Historians of the Civil War might progress most directly and rapidly if they applied the general logic of historical inquiry to the systematic, explicit, and precise study of concrete events, and, in the process, deliberately attempt to develop more powerful conceptual and methodological tools with which to reconstruct the behavior of men in society over time.<sup>104</sup>

Each of these five men frequently quotes from and uses as background or explanatory material books written by men in other disciplines.

Hofstadter often refers to Daniel Aaron, to Henry Nash Smith, to C. Wright Mills, to David Riesman, to Seymour Lipset, to Alfred Adler, and a host of renowned men in the social sciences including psychologists, economists, sociologists, philosophers, anthropologists, and political

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<sup>102</sup>Komarovsky, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>103</sup>Benson, Concept of Jacksonian Democracy, p. viii.

<sup>104</sup>Benson, "Causation and the Civil War," History and Theory, Vol. I, No. 1 (1961), p. 175.

scientists. McKittrick borrows terms and language from these disciplines. Elkins quotes Robert Merton, Eric Fromm, David Riesman, Bruno Bettelheim, Charles Wagley, Abram Kardiner, Theodore Adorno, C. Wright Mills, and refers to J. A. Tillinghast, A. L. Kroeber, Eugene Kogon, Freud, A. A. Brill, Anna Freud, Leo Alexander, Harry Stack Sullivan, Theodore Newcomb, and others. Meyers uses material from David Evans, Bray Hammond, Louis Hartz, C. Wright Mills, George Santayana and others. From Benson's bibliography, it would be very difficult to tell if he were a historian. The men referred to include Daniel Aaron, Robert Merton, Alvin Hansen, Herbert Feigl, Paul Lazarsfeld, Walter Lippman, Bernard Berelson, Robert Bowers. Thus, no attempt is made by any of the five to draw primarily from the field of history.

These men, then, have attempted major breakthroughs in American history by means of understanding and ideas learned from other disciplines, and methods and approaches borrowed from these disciplines. An evaluation of the success or failure of these attempts will have to wait for the next chapter, but the attempt has been made by each of them--an attempt which has resulted in each case with a very different interpretation or explanation or solution than has previously been made. A word of caution--the word solution must be used with care for not one of these five men views his interpretation as a final solution nor does he now feel the matter closed. Each has inferred or stated that this is only a beginning--the door has only been opened a crack--awaiting additional research, further studies. No final judgment has been rendered on the basis of these breakthroughs but rather they were intended as a prelude,

a spur, a challenge, a suggestion, an exploratory study, a tentative appraisal. These five bring with them a sense of that total culture that supports the political and social scene. One feels a burst of new energy, a seemingly more brilliant elaboration of the obvious.

Some would refer to this group of men as revisionists but this word says so little that it is best left out of the vocabulary of this thesis. However they are a group, although not a closed group. Perhaps with further study, men like David Aaron, Henry Nash Smith, Kenneth Stamp and others could be added to the list.

Another readily observable factor is the feeling that these five men have a higher motive above and beyond their desires to attempt major breakthroughs. There seems to be no reason to view these higher motives with cynicism or to view them as having little importance. It seems far more sensible to accept at face value what Hofstadter, Elkins, McKittrick, Meyers and Benson indicate as their basic reasons for searching, study and writing history. They appear to be saying that they are adding to understanding--understanding of the past that is vital if American is to rise to the challenge of the 20th Century and meet its own problems and the world crisis with both intelligence and courage.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUCCESS OR FAILURE: PROBABLE IMPACT ON FUTURE RESEARCH IN AMERICAN HISTORY

#### A. DETERMINATION OF AUTHORS' SUCCESS OR FAILURE

Possibly one of the most valid ways to evaluate if historians have succeeded in accomplishing what they set out to do is to analyze the comments and opinions as to their success or failure by academicians in the fields of history and other related disciplines. If the members of the quintet receive a warm reception by most of their reviewers, this may serve as an answer in itself but if the reception is cold or critical, the criticisms must be evaluated to determine their worth on the basis of the previously conducted evaluation of the writings of the five men. The reviews will be used again, this time concentrating upon the criticism therein. All known reviews have been gathered together and none will be excluded for any reason. However, if the review only contains a factual statement as to the contents of the book it will be tabulated as such and omitted from actual analysis.

The reviews, in order to bring some order to them, have been grouped in six categories. The classification is certainly "unscientific" and crude. But it serves the purpose of making it possible to work with 107 reviews on eleven different books by five different authors. The categories are:



1. Completely positive.
2. Positive with a few criticisms.
3. Equally positive and negative.
4. Negative with a few positive remarks.
5. Completely negative.
6. Neutral (no opinion expressed in any way).

Another writer, using the same categories, might render somewhat different judgments but in most cases, the category is obvious. There might be some difference of opinion over the reviews placed in categories 2, 3, and 4 but when viewed in an overall picture, especially noting the two extreme categories, at least a general idea should be gained as to how these authors are received by reviewers. But, another word of caution-- this does not necessarily represent the views of historians at large. This author suspects that the quintet has evoked more controversy than expressed herein. However this is something that cannot be measured, and as long as limits are set as to their use, these reviews should serve as another useful means of evaluation.

In presentation, taking each book alone, the reviews will be presented in categorical order. No attempt will be made to place them in any literary arrangement. They will merely be listed with the reviewer's name (if known) and his academic discipline. Emphasis will be placed on the critical remarks.

Hofstadter

Development and Scope of Higher Education, with six reviews, is viewed positively (categories 1 or 2) by five and one is neutral.

S. Barr in New Republic finds "that Mr. Hofstadter's thumbnail history furnishes some fascinating information."<sup>1</sup> Nels Bailkey,

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<sup>1</sup>Barr, loc. cit.

historian, Tulane University, has this opinion: "It would be difficult to find elsewhere a more competent and suggestive account of both the immense progress achieved in these areas and the blind alleys entered under the dual impetus of science and speculation."<sup>2</sup> George Benson, political scientist, reports it as an "interesting historical and philosophical review which merits careful reading by us all."<sup>3</sup> Fred Millett, in the American Quarterly, says, "Professor Hofstadter gives a brief but lucid and lively history."<sup>4</sup> Ordway Tead, Board of Education, New York City, views it as a "useful summary of the history of American higher education."<sup>5</sup>

Academic Freedom in the Age of the College has ten positive, one negative and four neutral<sup>6</sup> reviews.

The Mississippi Valley Historical Review makes the following comments:

. . . the authors make a fresh contribution of the highest scholarly order to intellectual history. . . .  
One's final conclusion indeed is that a sense of responsibility on the part of all those connected with academic life is more important than any institutional arrangements or legal safeguards. This book engenders a cautious optimism for it offers evidence that such

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<sup>2</sup> Nels Bailkey, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XL (1953-54), 364.

<sup>3</sup> George Benson, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Millett, loc cit.

<sup>5</sup> Ordway Tead, Review, Annals of the American Academy, CCLXXXVI (March, 1953), 216.

<sup>6</sup> W. T. Laprode, Review, Journal of Southern History, XXII (1956), 125; Review, Current History, XXVIII-IX (December, 1955), 382; Review, New York Herald Tribune Book Review, November 13, 1955, p. 14; Review, New Yorker, November 12, 1955, p. 218.

responsibility tends to be greater in older institutions and grows with time.<sup>7</sup>

Sidney Hook, Professor of Philosophy at New York City, observes, "Because it is written with perspective balance and a sense for the nourishing forces in American life which have transformed the tender plants of academic freedom into a robust flower, the volume . . . is a creditable achievement."<sup>8</sup> Milton Konvitz, political scientist at Cornell, finds the book is "a solid scholarly achievement and ought to be considered a strong contender for the Pulitzer Prize in history."<sup>9</sup> H. H. Wilson, political scientist at Princeton, calls it "a brilliantly concise and perceptive essay."<sup>10</sup> Henry Gideonese, President of Brooklyn College, uses the phrase, "scholarly and balanced study."<sup>11</sup> Peter Odegard, political scientist at the University of California, states:

No possible summary of these volumes can do justice to the very great contribution they make toward an understanding and hence to the defense of academic freedom in our society. The historical foundations are brilliantly set forth . . .<sup>12</sup>

Charles Barker, historian at Johns Hopkins, forcefully comments, "The background history . . . seems to me close to being required reading for academic men generally; and on the scale of scholarly achievement it is

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<sup>7</sup> Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VII (1956-57), 103.

<sup>8</sup> Hook, loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Konvitz, loc. cit.

<sup>10</sup> H. H. Wilson, loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Gideonese, loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Odegard, loc. cit.

equally impressive."<sup>13</sup> Logan Wilson, sociologist at the University of Texas, finds, "Aside from a fairly considerable number of interesting digressions not essential to the main theme, the delineation is excellent throughout."<sup>14</sup>

Morse Peckham, University of Pennsylvania, presents two opinions:

. . . do not seem to recognize the real nature of the problem. It is apparent throughout . . . that the shadow that falls upon university faculties is the shadow of power. Unfortunately professors do not like to think about power.

. . . . .  
. . . it is hoped that . . . it will be widely read not only for the valuable information . . . but also and especially for the pessimism.<sup>15</sup>

Social Darwinism is reviewed favorably by six; one reviewer gives conflicting views; one is neutral.

Ray Billington, historian at Northwestern observes, "This is an important book. It should inspire other studies. . . . Certainly no one interested in the history of ideas can afford to neglect its rich contribution."<sup>16</sup> Howard Jones, New York Times, states: "But if you really want to know why and how some of the contradictions in American social thought come into being, Social Darwinism is as excellent study as you can hope to find."<sup>17</sup> Sociologist, Floyd House, University

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<sup>13</sup>Barker, loc. cit.

<sup>14</sup>Logan Wilson, loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup>Morse Peckham, Review, American Quarterly, VIII (1956), 88-90.

<sup>16</sup>Billington, loc. cit.

<sup>17</sup>Jones, loc. cit.

of Virginia, comments, "Though not very long, it is remarkably meaty and very well written."<sup>18</sup>

Although John Lewis, political scientist, feels, "This is a critical and discriminating study," he wishes "that the author had more frequently related the ideas he examines to the earlier American rationalist tradition, but this does not detract from the value of what he has chosen to include."<sup>19</sup> John Turner, historian, states, "It is enough that Mr. Hofstadter in this scholarly survey, has made a significant contribution to our understanding of American intellectual and social history."<sup>20</sup> Bert Loewenberg, historian at Sarah Lawrence, makes this observation:

Despite the commendation which this book deserves, there is far too little conceptual discrimination. To point out where and how Darwinism and Spencerianism converged is just as needful as to distinguish between them. Nor are basic categories--monism, determinism, pragmatism--as crystally defined as their use warrants . . . . Yet Dr. Hofstadter has succeeded in fulfilling his primary objectives, what he has done, he has done well.<sup>21</sup>

Frank Hankins, political scientist at Smith, is much more critical than the others:

The study never departs from the historical to the critical levels; the author does not expose himself. The term, "Social Darwinism" is not clearly defined; . . . nothing is said of the determinism of Ward and Dewey. . . . What has been the resolution of the problem of the central theme . . . is not made clear.  
. . . . .

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<sup>18</sup>House, loc. cit.

<sup>19</sup>Lewis, loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Turner, loc. cit.

<sup>21</sup>Loewenberg, loc. cit.

As it stands, this volume contains excellent orientation material for younger students of the social sciences. . . . It would have lost none of its value and would have been more of a contribution had its author fitted his materials into the postulates of the sociological theory of knowledge. . . . The author seems aware of the parallelism between the shifts from the rough-and-tumble, atomistic free-for-all of the frontier to the regulated integrations of a technological culture, but he makes no use of this approach.<sup>22</sup>

Twelve of the reviewers of American Political Tradition reviewed it positively, five gave equally positive and negative reports and two were neutral.

Francis Simkins, historian, observes, "It is a brilliantly controversial and interpretative book."<sup>23</sup> John Stalker in Survey finds, "The essays are brilliantly written . . . in a refreshingly honest and critical appraisal."<sup>24</sup> In School and Society, the phrases used are "shrewd insight and "new interpretation."<sup>25</sup> Daniel Aaron says, "This book is one of the most remarkable pieces of historical writing to be published during the last ten years."<sup>26</sup> John Berthel of the Columbia College Library, views it as "a thoughtful, penetrating controversial study."<sup>27</sup>

"Probably the keenest of the brief interpretative cross-sections of American history," is the interpretation of historian Earl Pomeroy.<sup>28</sup>

C. Vann Woodward writes as follows:

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<sup>22</sup>Hankins, loc. cit.

<sup>23</sup>Simkins, loc. cit.

<sup>24</sup>Stalker, loc. cit.

<sup>25</sup>Review, School and Society, September 11, 1948, p. 176.

<sup>26</sup>Aaron, loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup>Berthel, loc. cit.

<sup>28</sup>Pomeroy, loc. cit.

Mr. Hofstadter has penetrating things to say in all his portraits. He sketches his Easterners with a skilled, sure hand, particularly the two New Yorkers, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. He is not always so deft with his Southerners and Westerners. . . . On the other hand, he does not adopt the popular eastern, interpretation of Jacksonism; his treatment of Woodrow Wilson is brilliant; and his handling of Herbert Hoover leaves little to be desired.<sup>29</sup>

Albert Huegli, political scientist, makes these statements:

The complaint would have to be on the score of what was left out rather than what was put in. The reader has a vague suspicion that things are over simplified; human beings are just too complex, and they say too much that is contradictory in a lifetime to be treated so briefly as in this book. . . . author rises to brilliant heights on some occasions, as in his chapter on J. C. Calhoun.

. . . . .  
This is the work of a keen and cultivated mind which has organized a prodigious mass of material into a forceful challenge to contemporary reflection on what is commonly called "the American Heritage."<sup>30</sup>

Perry Miller says:

I do not always go along with Hofstadter's interpretation--that of Jefferson is the weakest; . . . for the moment this is a triumph of humane letters, and it proclaims Hofstadter an outstandingly brilliant scholar of his generation.<sup>31</sup>

George Mayberry in New Republic points out:

The important contribution of this book is that it provides a sharp and challenging analysis of Lincoln who is presented as he was. . . . T. R. also comes out as he was.

. . . . .  
This is an extremely important book but it must be read with caution. In his attempt to clear the record of the folk-myths . . . Hofstadter himself has made the mistake at times of belittling genuine contributions of the men he has choosen to represent. . . . probably will have no general sale.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> C. Vann Woodward, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXV (1948-49), 681.

<sup>30</sup> Huegli, loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Perry Miller loc. cit.

<sup>32</sup> George Mayberry, Review, New Republic, November 29, 1948, p. 27.

Gerald Johnson in the New York Times reports:

Perhaps the most brilliant of the essays is on F. D. R. . . . The finest bit of political analysis . . . the description of John C. Calhoun. . . . By contrast the essay on Woodrow Wilson seems . . . the least provocative. . . . He has proved himself an able historian who has written an excellent book.<sup>33</sup>

Merrill Peterson, historian, finds "Hofstadter has written a series of brilliant studies," although those on Phillips and the Spoilsmen have the "least to offer." He criticizes in detail:

The weakness of Hofstadter's thesis, from which it logically follows that American history would have been essentially the same no matter which of the major parties controlled the government, is nowhere more apparent than in the case of Jefferson. Today, to agree with Hofstadter that Jefferson and the Federalists occupied common ground and arrived at a common end is to assume first, that had the Federalists retained power the end would have been the same; second, that the Federalists sacrificed nothing in becoming Republicans; third, that the most important events resulting from Jefferson's leadership--the Louisiana Purchase, war with England--were superfluous to the political tradition. Just as it is impossible to understand Jefferson's place in the tradition outside of the context of Hamiltonian Federalism, so it is impossible to understand the Jackson movement without the background of Whig ideas and policies.<sup>34</sup>

Fred Cahill, Jr. in the Yale Review feels that "Mr. Hofstadter here succeeds in making twelve individuals and groups important as Americans and as lively personalities. Whether one agrees with him or not, it is not a book to ignore." He then elaborates on the shortcomings:

One suspects at times that the brilliance of statement conceals a certain intemperance of conclusion--thereby incurring a double disability. . . .flat rejection of the principle of balanced government . . . . Then, too, one wonders why the author elects to follow a policy of deft "debunking" in the case of Jefferson while, at the same time, he is so careful to insist that the Founding Fathers ought to be considered in their own time and not in terms of the twentieth

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<sup>33</sup>Gerald Johnson, loc. cit.

<sup>34</sup>Peterson, loc. cit.



century. . . . It might also seem strange to some that a scholar who rejects the "great man" theory of history, as Mr. Hofstadter does in the essay on Franklin Roosevelt, should pay it the implicit compliment of choosing the biographical form as a vehicle for his ideas; and if it should be objected that these are representative figures only, then one might ponder why the book's title includes the phrase "and the men who made it."<sup>35</sup>

Francis Coker, political scientist at Yale, asks these questions:

Is he right in believing that he upsets some popular, academic, or literary legend when he points out that Jefferson failed to follow a policy of "pure" democratic agrarianism, that Jackson had no program "to uproot property" and reconstruct society on "drastically different lines," that Wilson did not plan systematically for "the larger collective life ahead," and that Franklin Roosevelt "did not propose socialism?" How certain is he that drastic, up-rooting reforms were desired or needed in Jackson's time, or some "pure" economic system in Jefferson's time, or in ours? And does the newer psychological and political knowledge he talks about show us that a republican philosophy and a sense of moderation ceased after the time of the Founding Fathers to be praiseworthy, realistic, statesmanlike traits? . . . However much Hofstadter may overstate his thesis at many points, he sets it forth with a wealth of vivid and relevant illustration, making clearer some phases of our tradition that we may underemphahsize.<sup>36</sup>

Avery Craven feels, "The approach from a definite point of view tends to oversimplify and, in some cases, to distort--to distort particularly by omission--but the analyses are always penetrating and the grasp on events and personalities firm enough to make most imterpretations at least plausible."<sup>37</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. goes into greater detail:

Mr. Hofstadter has clearly not given the same full and critical attention to the question of the American political tradition that he gave to the subjects of his various essays. In general, he holds to that new school which preferences to emphasize "the common climate of American opinion," . . . so Mr. Hofstadter in his introduction happily resolves American political conflict into a shared

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<sup>35</sup> Cahill, Jr., loc. cit.

<sup>36</sup> Coker, loc. cit.

<sup>37</sup> Craven, loc. cit.

belief "in the rights of property, the philosophy of economic individualism, the value of competition." . . .

. . . . .  
One is almost tempted to ask why he did not add God, home, and mother, in which our political leaders doubtless also shared a belief. There is of course some merit in this viewpoint; it serves as a valuable corrective for any who would suppose that American history has been a series of profound and convulsive conflicts. But, as you may not see the forest for the trees, so you may run the danger of not seeing the trees for the forest; and the historian must strike some balance. The rest of Mr. Hofstadter's book, it seems to me, renders his introduction not false (because what he says is perfectly true), but somewhat irrelevant. . . . The slighting of the conservative strain also leads to some foreshortening of the American political tradition. Neither the profundities of John C. Calhoun nor the fatuities of Herbert Hoover can be accepted as representative of the best of American conservatism; and the essay on Theodore Roosevelt seems to me a somewhat routine brush-off of a man who might well be re-examined in the light of a great attempt to restore responsibility to American conservatism.

. . . . .  
But in most respects The American Political Tradition is an important and refreshing work and signals the appearance of a new talent of first-rate ability in the writing of American history.<sup>38</sup>

Charles Sydnor, historian, "does not believe that Hofstadter has clearly described this common ground, and he doubts that he has discovered it. The unifying principle in this collection of essays is not a political tradition that runs through American history but a set of attitudes and predilections in the mind of the author." Further, "many of his thoughts command respect and admiration; yet most readers will likely find themselves in sharp disagreement with some of his interpretations . . . . The reader is also disturbed by a good many exaggerations and half-truths . . . . parallel between Calhoun and Marx has been

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<sup>38</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Review, American Historical Review, LIV (April, 1949), p. 612.

pushed too far." However, "these criticisms should not obscure the great virtues of this book."<sup>39</sup> Eliot Janeway in Saturday Review criticizes Hofstadter on several points:

His own assessment and reinterpretation are both interesting and exasperating and to this reader, rather more exasperating than interesting. . . . This book is superficial by serious intellectual standards and supercilious by realistic political standards. . . . It is a tract, not a systematic history.

. . . . .  
But it is a point of view that makes the book and it is an odd point of view . . . . What Hofstadter's history of the sovereignty of property in America fails to show is that the politicians have displaced the conspicuous capitalists as the representatives of property.<sup>40</sup>

For Age of Reform, there is one neutral review, fourteen which are positive, one equally positive and negative and one completely negative.

According to William Brewer, editor of the Journal of Negro History, "When committees on prize-awards for 1955 in American history evaluate productions, they will find it difficult not to bestow their blessings upon Hofstadter's ingenious explorations among reforms and reformers."<sup>41</sup> Edward Kirkland, historian at Bowdoin College, states: "This is for my money the best book on Populism and Progressivism."<sup>42</sup> To George Mowry in the Progressive, Hofstadter ". . . is one of America's truly outstanding younger historians."<sup>43</sup> David Fellman, political scientist at the

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<sup>39</sup>Sydnor, loc. cit.

<sup>40</sup>Janeway, loc. cit.

<sup>41</sup>W. M. Brewer, Review, Journal of Negro History, XL-IXL (1955-56),166.

<sup>42</sup>Kirkland, loc. cit.

<sup>43</sup>Mowry, loc. cit.

University of Wisconsin, has this to say: "Hofstadter's book will help us to appreciate more fully an extremely important part of our intellectual and political heritage."<sup>44</sup> Arthur Ekirch, Jr., historian, finds Hofstadter a man "who has done much to enrich the writing of our political and intellectual history."<sup>45</sup>

Vincent Hopkins of Fordham has this observation:

It will appear to some that there is more continuity between these three movements in which the United States moved from excessive individualism to a greater realization of the demands of the common good than the author would seem willing to grant. But the difference in opinion are matters of degree and the historian is in Professor Hofstadter's debt for emphasizing the dissimilarities.<sup>46</sup>

Although the Mississippi Valley Historical Review demands that the book be considered for the Pulitzer Prize, it also makes two criticisms:

The author occasionally fails to understand the agrarian mind and he is making some of his judgments about populism and agrarian progressivism not in terms of the conflicts of the past, but rather more fully in terms of the author's urban present.

. . . . .  
In discussing the causation of the progressive movement the author has perhaps overstressed the "sense of guilt" factor, and has overlooked the place of American women in the movement, and the function of the rapid secularization of a religious fundamentalism.<sup>47</sup>

Historian Arthur Mann of Smith feels "the chapter on the New Deal is too sketchy. . . . Students who follow will also want to include what Mr. Hofstadter has left out: civil liberties, civil rights, labor, education

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<sup>44</sup>Fellman, loc. cit.

<sup>45</sup>Ekirch, Jr., loc. cit.

<sup>46</sup>Vincent Hopkins, Review, Thought, XXXII (1957), 303.

<sup>47</sup>Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VIII (1955-56), 768.

and equal rights for women. . . . But what he has done is magnificent."<sup>48</sup> D. W. Brogan, political scientist at Cambridge views it as "an important, and, to use a cliché, an exciting book." However, considering Hofstadter's belief that the New Deal was new, Brogan says, "I don't find this thesis totally convincing."<sup>49</sup> Robert Carr, a law and political science professor, finds that "this present volume . . . will almost surely stand as one of the best." However, Carr disagrees to some degree: "Some of the book's judgments will stir disagreement. Whether Populism must accept major responsibility for American anti-Semitism is certainly debatable. . . . The carefully developed argument that, since 1898, war has been the enemy of American reform leaves one at least partly unconvinced."<sup>50</sup>

"I believe that The Age of Reform is the best as it is the roundest and most reflective interpretation so far of industrial-age reformism." So states a reviewer in the American Quarterly. But he also adds, "Hofstadter's achievement will seem little less if, before long, some of his propositions--for instance about 'status revolution' and about the differences between Progressivism and the New Deal--may be somewhat pared down."<sup>51</sup> John Roche, political scientist at Brandeis, feels Professor Hofstadter has written "a superb book. . . . The Age of Reform entitles Hofstadter to rank with C. Vann Woodward as a master

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<sup>48</sup>Mann, loc. cit.

<sup>49</sup>Brogan, loc. cit.

<sup>50</sup>Carr, loc. cit.

<sup>51</sup>Review, American Quarterly, IX (1957), 461.

of creative synthesis, . . ." The criticism stated by Roche includes these two:

Professor Hofstadter has neglected entirely the Socialists, and the latter group, in my opinion, deserves inclusion in his "Progressive" category. . . . I disagree with Hofstadter's attempt to disengage the New Deal from the reform tradition. . . the roots of the New Deal were inextricably lodged in the reform tradition, notably that of the Wilson administration.<sup>52</sup>

The New Yorker states, "For all the tinsel, however, this is a serious and useful book."<sup>53</sup>

Norman Pollack, Harvard University, wrote a 22-page article, "Hofstadter on Populism: A Critique of The Age of Reform," which subjects this book to a step-by-step, vigorous criticism. Many very plausible points are made, points on which Hofstadter appears vulnerable.

Only a small portion is repeated here:

Basically, psychology imposes a static model of society upon the study of social movements because it requires a standard or reference point by which to judge what is or is not irrational. Thus all behavior not conforming to the model is categorized as irrational, with the result that the analysis is based in favor of the status quo and places all protest movements by definition at a disadvantage. . . . Thus an obvious defect of psychological analysis is its tendency to highlight deviation from society without directing attention to the causes for the protest. This is precisely the fault of Hofstadter's use of psychology. He conveniently dismisses Populism as an unwarranted protest against nonexistent grievances without admitting into evidence the factors underlying its development. . . . In short, the historian should use psychology to supplement, not take over, the task of historical research.

. . . . .  
In the last analysis, however, this critique is directed to Hofstadter's methodological assumption because in less capable hands than

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<sup>52</sup> Roche, loc. cit.

<sup>53</sup> Review, New Yorker, November 19, 1955, p. 224.

his own, such procedures can only lead to denial that protest ever existed in American society."<sup>54</sup>

Elkins

For Slavery, five of the reviews are positive, four are equally positive and negative, two are negative, and two are neutral.

To John Lydenburg writing in the American Quarterly, "This is a fresh exciting book."<sup>55</sup> The London Times finds it "not only bold; at times it is reckless; but we need a little recklessness in modern historiography and sociology."<sup>56</sup> Robert Gordon, Sociologist at the University of Chicago, states: "If there is anything at all to social science, then we should see more books like this one." He later defends some of Elkins' methods:

This time the lesson is drawn from the concentration camps of recent history. This is admittedly a somewhat daring comparison in view of the extreme nature of the camps, but is accomplished convincingly and with restraint. . . . The argument at this point is bolstered by a knowledgeable consideration of theories of personality dynamics. Whatever one's attitude toward the theories in question, the relevance of the behavioral evidence to the actual historical event of slavery is striking.<sup>57</sup>

John Ward, historian at Princeton, comments as follows: "Stanley Elkins has produced one of the most exciting and stimulating books on American institutional and intellectual life that we have had for a long time." With somewhat more reserve, he adds, "If we take as valid the widespread

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<sup>54</sup>Norman Pollack, "Hofstadter on Populism: A Critique of The Age of Reform," Journal of Southern History, XXVI (1960), 496 & 500.

<sup>55</sup>Lydenburg, loc. cit.

<sup>56</sup>Review, The Times (London), March 25, 1960, p. 190.

<sup>57</sup>Gordon, loc. cit.

cultural stereotyped of the Negro as 'Sambo,' then the effects of unre-  
stricted power on personality are much to the point."<sup>58</sup> William Brewer  
finds that "Elkins has brilliantly pointed the way." But, "The work  
gives little attention to the impacts of slavery upon Southern institu-  
tions and the conclusion is that they were not influenced very much.  
This is contrary to actuality because Southern life, intellect, and  
institutions were profoundly conditioned by slavery."<sup>59</sup>

Arnold Sio, sociologist at Colgate criticizes, "The unique feature of  
the status of the slave in America was not due to emphasis on the slave as  
property but rather the restriction of the status to a single racial group..  
. . The inferior legal status was then also a moral inferiority." He  
states further:

Mr. Elkins has written an important and valuable book. . . . It is  
doubtful, however, that further research will accept his emphasis  
on the legal status of the slave or confirm his conception of ante-  
bellum slavery as a symmetrical and determinate "closed system."<sup>60</sup>

Frank Tannerbaun, historian at Columbia whose book Elkins used for  
background material, makes several interesting comments:

It simply is unhistorical to assume that the Negro and the white  
plantation community lived side by side through the centuries each  
insulated from the other to a point where they never met--that is,  
never influenced each other. . . . The issue of the impact of  
slavery upon the Negro's personality could have been made with a  
good deal less effort, and the book does not attempt to deal with  
the influence of the Negro upon the white community except as it  
affected its intellectually defensive pasture.  
.....

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<sup>58</sup> John W. Ward, Review, American Scholar, XXX (1960-61), 140.

<sup>59</sup> W. M. Brewer, Review, Journal of Negro History, VI (1960), 134.

<sup>60</sup> Sio, loc. cit.



The merit of this book is that it opens up new ways of looking at the place of slavery in American history, as a part of the social, economic, political, and cultural history of the United States and not just of the Negro.<sup>61</sup>

Harvey Wish, historian at Western Reserve, states: "He [Elkins] is fully aware of the criticisms that can be leveled against his use of analogy as evidence and the application of social psychology, but he makes a very plausible case for the infantilizing tendencies of absolute power." His criticism must be considered:

His underlying assumption is open to question--his belief that the historical slave personality is correctly equated to "Sambo." Certainly such careful studies as Bell Wiley's Southern Negroes, 1861-65 reveal a much more rebellious slave, despite centuries of bondage, than Elkins' Slavery admits. Minority peoples have long learned the advantages of superficial adaptation to the whims of majority groups. And Ulrich B. Phillips knew nothing about social psychology.<sup>62</sup>

Henry Simms, historian at Ohio State, takes exception to Elkins' feeling that there were no or little slave insurrections.<sup>63</sup> However, David Donald blasts the whole book:

His argument suffers from having a dubious unstated major premise--that the southern Negro was indeed a Sambo, something that Elkins assumes but nowhere even attempts to prove. Some time ago Elkins presented this portion of his study before a seminar at the Newberry Library, where a group of experts were devastatingly critical of his theory. Rather than profiting by this criticism he has concluded that the experts suffered from a lack of familiarity with the use of this "kind of extended metaphor" and has clung firmly to his analogy despite its poor taste and worse logic.

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<sup>61</sup>Tannenbaum, loc. cit.

<sup>62</sup>Harvey Wish, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, III (1960-61), 319.

<sup>63</sup>Simms, loc. cit.

The reading of secondary materials, a broad-ranging interest in other disciplines, and an extended use of comparisons and analogies do not compensate for the want of basic research. One must agree with the author's own evaluation of his book: "It does not pretend to be a history, in either extended or limited sense."<sup>64</sup>

Abraham Barnett, Social Science Reference Librarian at Purdue,

also criticizes:

Elkins' evidence for such an infantilizing process is a speculative, inconclusive projection . . . . The proof of this audacious reaffirmation of the Sambo type is sparse, conjectural and unconvincing . . . . Conjecture, impressionism, moot generalizations, debatable selection of events further mar the work, especially the section on the abolitionists . . . . limited recommendation.<sup>65</sup>

Six of the reviewers of Andrew Johnson viewed it positively, one makes equally positive and negative comments, and one is negative.

C. Vann Woodward finds this book "a superbly written reinterpretation."<sup>66</sup> Willaim Heaps, librarian, views it as "a scholarly, heavily documented, and fair-minded work."<sup>67</sup> David Donald takes a positive stand: "As an extremely able and provocative monograph, it will ultimately do much to reshape our thinking about the entire controversial Reconstruction story."<sup>68</sup> Bernard Weislarger, historian at the University of Chicago, feels "it is a brave book for a first book and does enormous credit to the author." However, he offers a few criticisms.

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<sup>64</sup>David Donald, Review, American Historical Review, LXV (July, 1960), 921.

<sup>65</sup>Abraham Barnett, Review, Library Journal, LXXXIV (November, 1959), 3581.

<sup>66</sup>Review, American Quarterly, XII (1960), 219.

<sup>67</sup>Heaps, loc. cit.

<sup>68</sup>David Donald, Review, New York Herald Tribune Book Review, September 25, 1960, p. 6.

"McKittrick may have underestimated the tensions underlying the superficial harmony of the summer of 1865."<sup>69</sup> Although, according to historian Edgar Tappin, "scholars cannot ignore McKittrick's groundbreaking study," he finds that "Thaddeus Stevens' role, however, is slighted and the references to Radical Reconstruction after 1868 are unflattering and unfair."<sup>70</sup>

T. Harry Williams approaches this book in two ways:

McKittrick claims that the Radicals were not a rigid group in the war, that they had no firm policy toward Reconstruction at the war's end and that they did not, at least for a significant period, control the process of Reconstruction. McKittrick does not seem to consider that there may have been phases of degrees of radicalism and that men passed through them quickly, some stopping at a particular point and others going on to greater extremes. It is doubtless true that previous writers have exaggerated the cohesiveness of the Radicals during the war and after. But now that the Radicals have been shown not to have existed in the war, one wonders what will come next.

.....

Professor McKittrick's vigorous book is certain to incite strong rebuttal, but it should be received with respect. It is a major work, carefully researched and deeply thoughtful and deserving of one of the major prizes awarded in the profession.<sup>71</sup>

William Hesselstine, historian, calls the book "a work of fiction"

and attacks several points:

For this, indeed, bears only a coincidental relation to the known and observed persons and events of the Reconstruction period. It begins, as only a novel might do, with the assumption that, in 1865, there was a clean slate upon which men of good will might write; that they judiciously considered the alternatives and prepared to make a just and lasting peace. But, in this idyllic situation, there were deterrents. The South did not make the "symbolic" submission that the Japanese did after World War II;

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<sup>69</sup>Weislarger, loc. cit.

<sup>70</sup>Tappin, loc. cit.

<sup>71</sup>T. Harry Williams, loc. cit.

the Democrats . . . were skillfully muddying the water for low partisan ends; and the stubborn, irrational A. J. Johnson refused, time after time, to be sweetly reasonable and surrender abjectly to the moderate program of the Radicals! The result, of course, was much confusion and some unhappiness--though it all did not add up to an Age of Hate or a Tragic Era. (There was hardly even a Critical Year.)

Such a thesis--elaborately argued with many an editorial interpolation--can be maintained only by ignoring the wartime acts of Lincoln and his Radical opponents, the "rotten borough" system which Lincoln planned and the anti-Lincoln animus of the Wage Davis Bill, Johnson's own political ambitions and the nature of the Union party, the work of the Union Leagues, Andrew Johnson's heinous financial schemes, the significance of debt repudiation, and the substantive nature of states rights.<sup>72</sup>

The Jacksonian Persuasion merits eight positive reviews, one equally both, and one that is negative.

Cecelia Kenyon finds it "a book of rare distinction."<sup>73</sup> Hodstadter says, ". . . it represents in itself one of those peak moments of insight which stand as consummation of, rather than contributions toward, historical understanding . . . . Few students of American history have hitherto been capable of such penetration and subtlety."<sup>74</sup> John Ward feels "Marvin Meyers' book is to be added to a growing list of books which extend the range of our perception and the richness of our field of vision."<sup>75</sup> In spite of a "somewhat confusing comparison of the

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<sup>72</sup>William Hesselstine, Review, Journal of Southern History, XXVII (February, 1961), 110.

<sup>73</sup>Kenyon, loc. cit.

<sup>74</sup>Hofstadter, Review, American Historical Review, LXII (October, 1957), xxxiv.

<sup>75</sup>John W. Ward, Review, American Quarterly, IX (1957), 464.

assumptions of the New York Constitutional Conventions of 1821 and 1846." Richard Longaker, political scientist at Kenyon College, considers it "beyond a doubt the most imaginative commentary on the Jacksonian period in recent years." He also comments, "It is of more than passing interest that A. M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s Age of Jackson contended that the "persuasion" was liberal and of the future; here the persuasion is essentially conservative and looks to the past."<sup>76</sup>

Harvey Wish of Western Reserve makes this statement:

There is a high plausibility to Meyers' interpretation of the Jacksonian spirit. It has the great virtue of meeting most of the contradictions that face those who try to discover a dominant mold in this movement. A more authoritative judgment as to its accuracy must await further studies of Jacksonians. The argument could be much better followed, had the author avoided the excessive use of highly novel phrases and expressions that constantly distract the reader. Fortunately, there are summaries for those who lose themselves along the way and the central theme is often reiterated.<sup>77</sup>

Charles Sellers, Jr., historian at Princeton, views it as "one of those rare books so provocative as to demand the attention of all American historians." But he asks this question: "I wonder, for example, whether Meyers distinguishes sufficiently between the Jacksonians proper and Americans in general, whether, that is, he grants enough significance to the differential appeal of the Whig and Democratic parties."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Longaker, loc. cit.

<sup>77</sup> Harvey Wish, Review, Political Science Quarterly, LXXIII (1958), 155.

<sup>78</sup> Sellers Jr., loc. cit.

Robert Riegel, historian at Dartmouth levies this judgment:

Any reader will probably regret the omissions of certain material and want to modify certain generalizations but such criticisms are not worth making in any general evaluation. The outstanding impression . . . is of an imaginative job well done.<sup>79</sup>

William Chambers, professor of political science, states, "He certainly accomplishes a sensitive, intelligent reformulation."<sup>80</sup>

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. defines Meyers' essay as "brilliant" but writes the following concise criticism:

I would suggest, though, that he has deferred needlessly to current fashions of interpretation in rejecting the economic interest approach. Far from being inconsistent with his thesis, his approach actually supports it. Indeed, later in the book, Mr. Meyers himself backs away rather precipitately from his own earlier rejection. He writes, "Merchants, bankers, promoters of various kinds, and the rich generally appear to have been disproportionately anti-Jackson"; what more than this have the proponents of the economic interest thesis ever claimed? But he has, in any case, performed a valuable service in so extended and illuminating an exposition of the elements in the myth, and in thereby helping explain both the potency of Jackson's appeal and the emotional acuteness of the political conflict.

An elucidation of the myth, however, does not provide a total accounting of Jacksonian democracy; nor, I imagine, would Mr. Meyers claim that it does. What the Jacksonians thought they were doing was one thing; what they did was another. Here Mr. Meyers is less satisfactory. He remains so bemused by the theory of Jacksonian democracy as "the movement which helped to clear the path for laissez-faire capitalism" that he fails to see that it also cleared the path for government intervention in the economy. What, after all, was the lasting significance of the Bank War but a definitive assertion that the public authority must be stronger than any private aggregation of economic power? And, by overlooking regulatory efforts of Jacksonian democracy on the state level, Mr. Meyers denies himself much of significance. True, this was regulation in the avowed interest of restoring laissez-faire; but government had to be vitalized before it could wither away. Here surely lay the true

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<sup>79</sup> Riegel, loc. cit.

<sup>80</sup> Chambers. loc. cit.

Jacksonian irony--and Mr. Meyers misses it completely--that a movement, dedicated as he rightly says to less government, should have produced more government; that a President, in the name of the restoration of primitive simplicities, should have ended up by making the Presidency more powerful than it had ever been before.<sup>81</sup>

Thomas Govan, historian, makes this critical judgment:

A far more important source of Jackson's popularity, particularly in the South and the West, was his Indian policy which is not even mentioned in this book. His determination to move all the Indian tribes west of the Mississippi River without regard to laws or treaties was so universally popular with land hungry Southerners and Westerners that politicians, personally hostile to Jackson and opposed to him on almost every issue, were forced into verbal loyalty until the nullification and force bill controversies freed them, in 1833 and 1834, to join the opposition under the battle cry of states rights and opposition to tyranny.

Myths, symbols, and other instances of "elusive psychological fact" are not unimportant in the search for the meaning of the political past, but they are not substitutes for a realistic analysis of the actual course of historical events. The Democratic and Whig parties were existent political institutions made up of men somewhat conscious of their motives, ambitions, and desires, and these conscious motivations partial though they may be, cannot be ignored by a historian if he wants to understand the past.<sup>82</sup>

#### Benson

Only one review is available for Concept of Jacksonian Democracy and it is certainly positive. Roy Nichols, historian at the University of Pennsylvania, writes, "This study reveals more clearly than anything I have yet seen what concepts and methods we must use if we are ever to lift political history out of the realm of the unreal and the imperceptive."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Review, Historian, XX (1957-58), 366.

<sup>82</sup> Govan, loc. cit.

<sup>83</sup> Nichols, loc. cit.

For Turner and Beard, there are two reviews--one negative and the other, equally positive and negative. Cushing Strout, historian, speaks well of Benson's efforts but concludes by saying, "But it seems too pessimistic to conclude that neither Turner's nor Beard's theses have yet been either established or refuted, as if no progress had been made since 1893 or 1913."<sup>84</sup> Oscar Handlin calls it a "stimulating volume" but levies several criticisms:

. . . intemperate and unconvincing polemic against the critics of the economic interpretation. . . . The bickering over details in the effort to add an explanatory gloss to Beard's text produces more heat than light. . . . To treat Turner and Beard as analytical social scientists and to focus upon their hypothesis is to miss their genuine significance as historians.<sup>85</sup>

Two of the reviews for Merchants, Farmers and Railroads are positive, two are negative, and one is neutral. The American Political Science Review reports, "This is a significant addition to the literature on the movement for railroad regulation."<sup>86</sup> Chester Wright, economist at the University of Chicago, terms it a "detailed, scholarly study."<sup>87</sup>

In the American Historical Review, Roy Hidy states that "Mr. Benson has produced a significant books," but Hidy also has some negative comments:

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<sup>84</sup> Strout, loc. cit.

<sup>85</sup> Handlin, loc. cit.

<sup>86</sup> Review, American Political Science Review, L (1956), 888.

<sup>87</sup> Chester W. Wright, Review, American Economic Review, IVL (June-December, 1956), 430.



Mr. Benson has overstated his case. Mercantile activities have received much more attention in this book than those of farmers. Attitudes of manufacturers are scarcely mentioned. In connection with the national scene, he has accorded insufficient weight to the demands of various groups all over the country as revealed in the report of the Cullen Committee. More careful editing and rewriting would have improved some sentences and paragraphs, and provided more coherence in some chapters.<sup>88</sup>

Richard Overton of the Bureau of Railway Economics makes several quite damning statements:

It is at once illuminating and infuriating, penetrating and perverse, original and trite. It reflects prodigious effort and acute indigestion, unwitting shrewdness and incredible naivete, a vast knowledge of trees and a woeful ignorance of the forest. It utterly fails to prove its thesis, yet more than justifies its existence by offering a brilliant commentary on a situation that apparently bores the author to distraction.

Although Overton calls it a "major contribution," he includes many other critical phrases: "style--awkward"; "facts--jumbled"; "its chief character--Thurber--never comes alive"; "there is no evidence whatever that Benson even tried to understand the relative positions or motives of the various railroad men involved"; "there is no bibliography"; "misprints, misspellings, incomplete sentences." Overton ends, "Perhaps as to both substance and form, it might have been better if this book had been scheduled for 1960."<sup>89</sup>

If one expected an explosion or a strong verbal barrage against the books written by members of the quintet, he would be sadly disappointed. Although care was taken in the presentation of the reviews to

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<sup>88</sup> Hidy, loc. cit.

<sup>89</sup> Richard Overton, Review, Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXII (1955-56), 760.

stress the criticisms, this does not tell the true story. After examining Figure 1 and Figure 2, it can be observed that the negative reviews for each writer are in a minority. Out of 105 reviews, the results after tabulation are as follows:

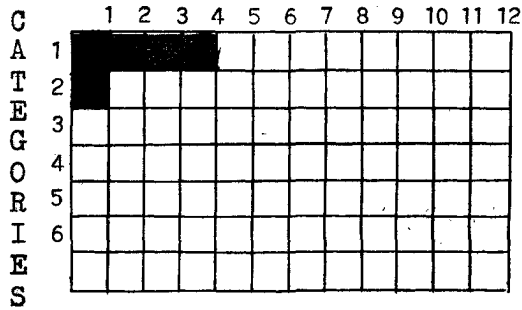
Category One:	Completely positive	40
Category Two:	Positive with a few Criticisms	28
Category Three:	Equally Positive and Negative	14
Category Four:	Negative with a few Positive Remarks	4
Category Five:	Completely Negative	7
Category Six:	Neutral	12

Thus the positive reviews total 68 while the total for the negative reviews is 11. If this were taken as the whole story, one could easily label these men, "rousing successes." However, after examining each writer individually, and weighing this evidence with other factors, the interpretation must be far more qualified.

Hofstadter looks good. His reviewers praise him highly but hold back judgment as to the acceptance of some of his interpretations. There is little consistency in their criticisms. It seems to be a matter of personal opinion or personal orientation. Little agreement appears present as to which of the essays in American Political Tradition are good and which are bad. Some term the essays on Calhoun and Wilson and F. D. R. as brilliant; others refer to them as Hofstadter's weakest. If any thread runs through all the reviews on Hofstadter's books, it is the questioning of what was left out, not primarily of what was included. Criticism of Hofstadter's thesis of a common ground in American political tradition in opposition to the conflict school stimulates several questions. However, in Hofstadter's case, the withholding of judgment or

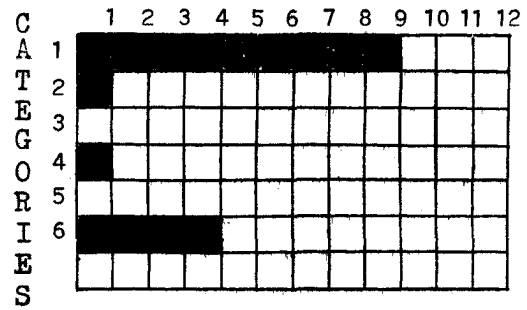
Development and Scope

No. of Reviews



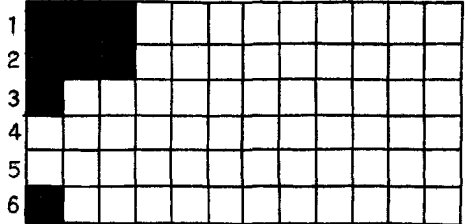
Academic Freedom

No. of Reviews



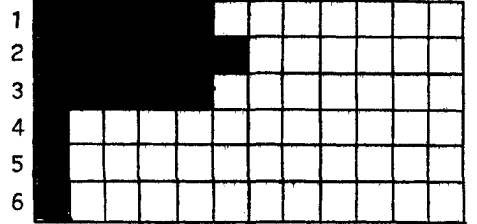
Social Darwinism

No. of Reviews



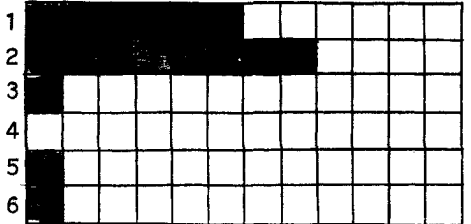
American Political Tradition

No. of Reviews

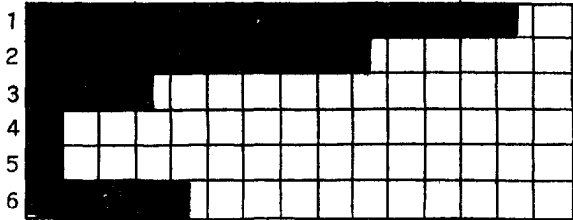


Age of Reform

No. of Reviews



No. of Reviews



All of Hofstadter's

Books

FIGURE 1

RATING BY HOFSTADTER'S REVIEWERS

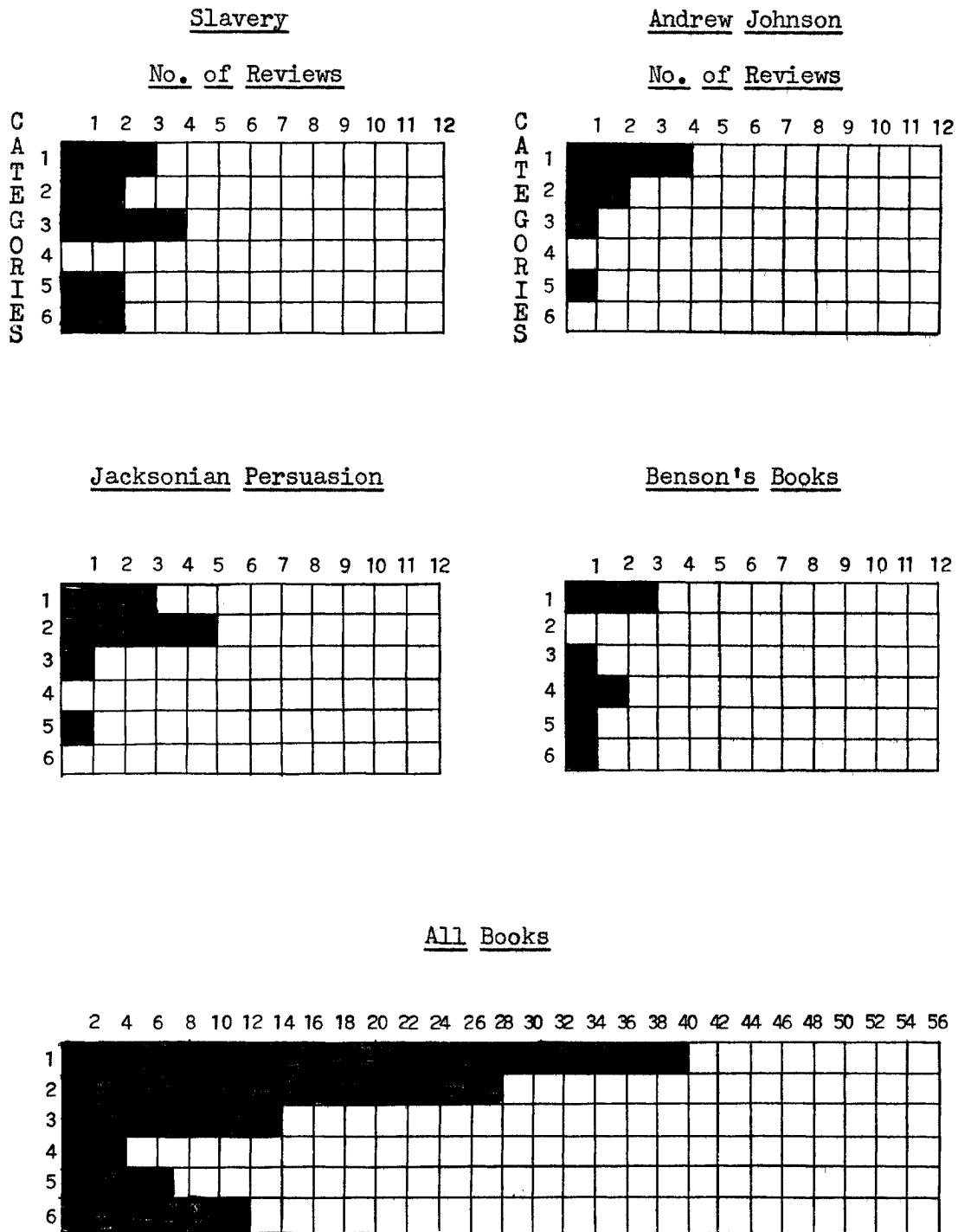


FIGURE 2  
RATING BY ELKINS, MCKITRICK, MEYERS, AND BENSON'S REVIEWERS  
AND TOTAL FOR ALL BOOKS

agreement by the reviewers does not seem to dampen to any degree the enthusiasm with which they receive him.

Elkins is perhaps the most misunderstood of the five, and in choosing the subject and approach which he did, it is evident he fully expected to be attacked by men who did not understand or who did not wish to understand what he was doing. On the whole, however, he, too, fares quite well. Sociologists like him and perhaps accord him more respect than historians. Had not Elkins so cleverly covered his path with a multitude of qualifying statements and explanations, he would be open to far more criticism than he received. However, it is difficult to attack a man who writes a book on a very controversial subject in a very controversial manner, and terms it only "an exploratory approach" to show "how this subject and others might be studied in the future."

McKittrick presents such a formidable research project that he makes it all but impossible for reviewers to do much more than withhold judgment and praise him for his prodigious scholarly efforts. One might state disagreement but to prove McKittrick wrong would be a painstaking, time-consuming endeavor. On the surface at least, McKittrick's points and conclusions appear to have behind them careful, laborious, meticulously-obtained research evidence. It would be difficult to refute this in a two-page book review. It appears, however, that McKittrick will have to present further evidence if his thesis, as to the absence of a cohesive strong Radical group, is going to stand.

Meyers also emerges with few bruises. His reviewers must have found themselves in quite a quandry. The Age of Jackson has challenged the best efforts of some of the most prominent historians in a relatively short period of time, and with several "very scholarly and perceptive" viewpoints floating around, it would be very tempting, indeed to pat Meyers on the back and add his name to the list. Meyers shows great skill and perception in the reading of others' works and since this is a new approach, it is little wonder that the reception is enthusiastic, regardless of acceptance or non-acceptance of his thesis.

Benson does not fare as well as the other four. But one must be careful not to jump to conclusions. It is difficult to judge a man who has written three books when only seven reviews on these books are available. Then, too, books on methodology (Benson's prime concern) are usually not as well received nor as interesting. However, more is involved here. Elkins may be the most misunderstood of the five, but Benson is the hardest to understand. Benson uses multivariate analysis and statistical tools to examine in detail different problems. Just following him is an effort, and to agree or disagree with him would require a thorough background in the use of these methods. As he has used his statistics in a manner that refutes the works of several historians, so it seems possible that others, with as complete an understanding of these methods, might use statistics in a manner that refutes Benson's claims. This cannot be accomplished in a book review. Unfortunately, Benson in his quest for new interpretations has sacrificed literary style, accurate writing, concise explanations and correct

grammar. Perhaps this seems refreshing to some but it will never win him any historical prizes. However, Benson's findings, if accepted at face value, are exciting and possibly more controversial than those of the other four. If the quality of his writing rises to the quality of his research, it may well be in future years that his name will rank high on a list of prominent American historians.

It is interesting to note the intense emotional reaction of some of the negative reviewers to these books. The adjectives used by some men are not objective or rational--they are loaded with feeling. Could it be that members of the quintet have challenged not only intellectual stands but also deep personal cherished beliefs? Is it possible that academic historians hold just as tightly to age-old myths as does the common populace? Unfortunate is the fact that no reviews are available on the articles these men have written, for some of their most controversial points are found in them and certainly would invoke criticism.

The charge could be made here that it is invalid to evaluate the reception by historians of these five men on the basis of 105 book reviews. The only answer would be to say that this is certainly true. The very nature of a review limits its usefulness. Too, absent are the stated opinions of hundreds of other scholars. Added to this is the fact that no "multivariate analysis" has been applied. It would, indeed, be interesting to compare and contrast the reviews of Hofstadter's Pulitzer Prize winning book, Age of Reform, with the reviews of those books of, say Allan Nevins and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., which have also won the Pulitzer Prize. It would be revealing to classify, into some

kind of grouping, all the American historians in the United States and then poll them as to their impressions of these five men. The results might be surprising if the reactions this writer has received personally from some prominent old-guard historians are any clue. However, this type of research is not possible at this time, even if it were desired.

An analysis of these reviews has its place, and fortunately other evidence is also available which can be added to that already mentioned. The fact cannot be overlooked that historians have considered both McKittrick's Andrew Johnson and Meyers' Jacksonian Persuasion of enough worth to grant them both the John H. Dunning Prize. The Age of Reform won the Pulitzer Prize. All of the men have written their books under foundation grants. Elkins, Meyers, and Benson had grants from the Rockefeller Foundation to write their books. McKittrick had both Ford and Rockefeller Foundation grants. Age of Reform was written with help from the Ford Foundation, Academic Freedom with assistance from the Rabinowitz Foundation. American Political Tradition was written under an Alfred A. Knopf Fellowship and Social Darwinism was published under the Albert J. Beveridge Memorial Fund with the copyright owned by The American Historical Association. All of the men hold positions of repute in major universities.

Several of the older group of historians quote Hofstadter often in books they have written. Henry Steele Commager's, The American Mind and Merle Curti's, The Growth of American Thought are only two examples. Commager refers to Hofstadter's Social Darwinism as "the most valuable



single study of the implications of Darwinian thought to America."<sup>90</sup> Later, Commager again states, "The best analysis of the impact of Spencer and Sumner on American thought," is Social Darwinism.<sup>91</sup> Merle Curti acknowledges his indebtedness to Hofstadter and quotes from Social Darwinism in several instances.<sup>92</sup>

Do scholars in other disciplines refer to the works of members of the quintet? The writings of all but Hofstadter are too recent to make any judgment possible, but for Hofstadter, the answer is certainly yes. Picking at random just two examples, David Riesman's, The Lonely Crowd and C. Wright Mills' The Power Elite, one finds several references to Hofstadter. Riesman uses Hofstadter in talking about interdisciplinary work.<sup>93</sup> Mills acknowledges Hofstadter's help with his book and quotes both Age of Reform and "Pseudo-Conservative Revolt."<sup>94</sup>

Thus, a concluding statement can be made. Hofstadter, Elkins, McKittrick, Meyers, and Benson have attempted major "breakthroughs" in the field of American history, and in the minds of many academicians of diverse discipline background, they have succeeded in their attempts.

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<sup>90</sup>Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 449.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 455.

<sup>92</sup>Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (2d ed. rev.: New York: Harper, 1951), pp. 845, 872, 873.

<sup>93</sup>David Riesman, The Lonely Road (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. xiv.

<sup>94</sup>C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford University Press, Galaxy Books, 1956), pp. 369, 408, 409, 410.

These "breakthroughs" have been made possible primarily by the use of distinctive diverse interdisciplinary methods--methods which have not yet found common usage in the field of history. Many academicians find the use of these methods by these men to be valid, challenging, enlightening, and every bit as important as the interpretations they have produced. Whether the reactions of academic men in history and related disciplines is positive or negative, these scholars appear quite willing to accord the five (with the possible exception of Benson in some instances) the respect and attention due serious, intelligent, challenging, and contributing scholars.

Have the five succeeded? Yes, they have succeeded in accomplishing what they set out to do--to challenge, to stimulate, to begin using different approaches, to enlarge the breadth and depth of historical research by the introduction of methods and ideas and techniques of other disciplines, to point the way to re-evaluations of the now-accepted solutions and explanations of problems in American history.

B. PROBABLE IMPACT ON FUTURE RESEARCH IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Having found that Hofstadter, Elkins, Meyers, McKittrick and Benson receive serious attention by other scholars, the question must then be asked, "To what avail and to what end?" Are the writings of these men seriously enough considered to have a possible impact on future thinking and research? If an impact is evident in the future, by what will it be made--by the new ideas or the new methods?

If the writings of these men are being read, then it stands to reason that the ideas expressed therein will provoke thought and questioning. The ideas, themselves, are challenging and exciting and many appear in opposition to this old school of thought. Thus, given a wide array of problems in American history, given a number of relatively controversial solutions to, or explanations of, these problems, and given serious and respectful attention and consideration accorded to the controversial writers by numerous prominent scholars, it does not seem presumptuous to predict further agitation, further research, further controversy, and further implementation pertaining to the ideas discussed herein. Thus, an impact from these ideas on research for at least the next few years appears unavoidable.

In considering the impact of the methods, the interdisciplinary approaches and bases of understanding suggested by members of the quintet, it is this writer's opinion and interpretation that the foremost purpose of much of the writing of the men studied is to emphasize the effect of their particular modes of operation on future historiographical research. One suspects that a reception of ideas only would prove extremely

disappointing to these men. However, even if the use of these techniques were accepted, obvious difficulties in their implementation, their understanding, and their general use could be foreseen.

Unless these interdisciplinary approaches are used with care, with a thorough background knowledge and with intelligent, alert caution, a good deal of harm, of wasteful effort, of misleading claims, of invalid evidence could distort and undermine the valuable research that has been done in the field of history to date. In order, then, to follow the work of these five men, with work of comparable quality, what would it take?

What would it take to produce in the manner of Richard Hofstadter? Over and above the qualifications necessary in order to produce a Ph. D. in history, several prerequisites are necessary. By age 45 a man would have to have a thorough knowledge of philosophy and the history of ideas and be able to relate historical events within the context of this knowledge. He, then, should have somehow acquired a deep understanding of psychology and psychological method so that he could approach figures in history with the purpose of going behind the mask, scrapping off the crust, and exposing the human personality lying deep within. His knowledge of sociology would have to be sufficient to enable him to examine group and mass behavior, and individuals in terms of this group and mass behavior in a manner that lays bare the emotions and thoughts that motivate human beings both singularly and collectively. Coupled with this very bare minimum, he would also have to have a prodigious memory, a comprehension of all areas of American history and a familiarity with

other areas of history, and the ability to express himself vividly and clearly in literary form.

Someone wishing to imitate Stanley Elkins would have to first attain proficiency in the fields of psychology, sociology and anthropology, not only in understanding but in accurate use of methods. One who desired to follow after Eric McKittrick would not only have to be a fine historian and a good psychologist but would also have to be an individual of unusual perception and sensitivity. Students in the "Meyers' method" would do well to have majored in English as well as history and be extremely adept in the art of literary criticism. Those following Lee Benson would have an exceptionally difficult task--they would need a thorough grounding in the use of sociological methods and would have to excel in the field of statistics. The use of interdisciplinary methods necessitates perhaps above all an ability to go behind, to dig under, to move through a different passage, to contain an imaginative and sensitive mind within an academic framework.

This writer feels a need has been shown for continued and expanded use of the approaches and methods and interpretations examined in this thesis. Perhaps major breakthroughs can be achieved in no other way. But it is highly unlikely that the bulk of American historians will ever find the time to acquire a knowledge of other disciplines. A thorough background in the field of American history alone is becoming harder and harder to obtain. Also, some prominent historians will never grant this type of research work the legitimacy which it deserves. Possibly a pessimistic attitude is not in order here, but it is this writer's

feeling that if an impact on historiography is going to be made by means of such interdisciplinary methods, this impact will be the result of laborious, concentrated effort on the part of a few, leading and stimulating and challenging the many. Mr. Hofstadter, the acknowledged leader of this group, would disagree. He is far more optimistic than this writer and he most certainly should be heard. Explicitly writing on this subject, his following remarks certainly provide an interesting summary for this thesis:

I speak of the historian as having contacts with the social sciences rather than as being a social scientist for reasons which I hope to make clear. . . . But the historian's contact with the social sciences is clearly of more importance to the present generation of historians than it has been at any time in the past.

. . . Perhaps the most important function which the social sciences can perform for the historian is that they provide means, in some cases indispensable means, by which he can be brought into working relationship with certain aspects of the modern intellectual climate. They bring to him a fresh store of ideas with which to disturb the excessively settled routines of his thought; but they also serve a catalytic function for him: they show him how he may adapt for his own purposes certain modern insights into human behavior and character which he cannot, on his own, immediately and directly appropriate.

The next generation may see the development of a somewhat new historical genre, which will be a mixture of traditional history and the social sciences. It will differ from the narrative history of the past in that its primary purpose will be analytical. It will differ from the typical historical monograph of the past in that it will be more consciously designed as a literary form and will focus on types of problems that the monograph has all too often failed to raise. It will be informed by the insights of the social sciences and at some points will make use of methods they have originated. Without pretending to be scientific, it may well command more reciprocal interest and provide more stimulation for social scientists than a great deal of the history that is now being written. In this genre the work of the historian can best be described as a sort of literary anthropology. His aim will be a kind of portraiture of the life of nation and individuals, classes and groups of men; his approach to every system of culture and sub-culture will be

that sympathetic and yet somewhat alien and detached appreciation of basic emotional commitments that anthropologists bring to simpler peoples.

. . . . .  
But to me it is not the formal methods of the social sciences, useful as they may be, that are of central significance, but rather their substantive findings, their intellectual concerns, and their professional perspectives. Taken in this way, their value paradoxically rests not in their ability to bring new methods to bear upon old problems but in their ability to open new problems which the historian has usually ignored. . . .

. . . For me the fundamental value of these perspectives is in their addition to the speculative richness of history. The more the historian learns from the social sciences, the more variables he is likely to take account of, the more complex his task becomes. The result may be that his conclusions become more tenuous and tentative, but this is a result to be welcomed. . . . While he may acquire some usable methods from the social sciences, I doubt that the new techniques that he may acquire will outweigh the new problems that he will take on. His task has not been simplified; it has been enlarged. His work has not greater certainty, but greater range and depth.<sup>95</sup>

Whatever the outcome, one must hope that the majority opinion never becomes that of the prominent historian, T. Harry Williams, who dooms to failure "the whole effort to achieve historical synthesis by the objective methods of the social sciences."<sup>96</sup>

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On this note of pessimism, following what has been primarily an objective and impartial analysis, coupled with an orderly progression of proofs and a coldly logical summation, the thesis could now end. To write a bland *fini* to the subject at this point, however, would prove an utterly frustrating and dissatisfying experience to this writer. Momentarily, I would like to break the deadly chains of colorless thesis writing

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<sup>95</sup> Stern, *op. cit.*, pp. 360-65.

<sup>96</sup> The American Historical Review, LXII (April, 1957), 760.

and express my own conclusions on what I consider is really the core of the problem--historical research and writing in the future. The previous discussion has centered on the probable impact of these five men on future research in American history. The base of discussion was widened to include a consideration of the probable impact on future historical research of the use and understanding of interdisciplinary methods and techniques as illustrated by these men. I am cognizant of possible influence from the ideas expressed by the five men but my main concern is with their methodological and historiographical methods.

Two questions need to be posed. First, might other historians learn from these five something of value that would improve American historical research, writing, and teaching in general? Secondly, are the insight and the understanding evidenced by these men to be limited in the future only to them? The probable answer to this latter question thus far, to me appears to be yes. The probable results of such adventures on the part of historians into the land of the behavioral scientists will be limited to a small group of earnest scholars with wide visions and imaginative minds. The field of American history will be touched but not penetrated. Inaccurate historical fiction, loose pastoral legends, and laboriously researched and documented myths continue to be marketed to the easily confused and non-discriminating public under such unrealistic but impressive and commanding designations as "The History of Mankind." This public, with its lack of critical perception, with its accommodating docility will continue to draw, for its membership, from the ranks of educated, historical scholars. These



latter, in their so-called search for truth, will persist in substituting nonsense for reality, distortion for fact, carelessness for authenticity, romanticism for understanding, supposition for actuality, conjecture for verity. In the end, students will be educated in the legend of America.

The five men studied have broken the bonds of traditional historical research and have reached out, in a beginning experimental manner, to other disciplines for ideas, for method and techniques, for understanding. New Laboratory doors have been opened but if no other historians follow them through those doors, if even just to glance around, the probable impact of the approaches to research in American history suggested by these men will be slight, a ripple on a vast lake.

Evidently, I have reached three conclusions--first, that something of lasting value can be learned from Hofstadter, Elkins, McKittrick, Meyers, Benson; secondly, that research in American history is lacking in certain elements: and thirdly, that the probable impact in no way resembles the desired impact. It would be to the benefit and advantage of historical research if historians would learn to understand, to apply, and to use with skill, interdisciplinary ideas and techniques as these five have done.

The tools and concepts studied in this thesis have merit and value far beyond the contexts in which they have been used. Richard Hofstadter emphasizes the study of ideas in connection with events and facts. He is not only concerned with the thinking of the times but with understanding men and periods with the use of concepts and techniques brought to light by modern studies in the field of sociology, anthropology,

psychology. In the context of these insights he draws attention to public moods, myths, nostalgia, psychic satisfactions, and group pressures. The phrase, "status revolution," is not from historical vocabulary but, as Hofstadter applies it, a new understanding of the progressive era is possible. The phrase, "psychic crisis," would certainly not be found in a history book written in 1900 but an understanding of its meaning can deepen one's understanding of the events of the 1890's. To describe the New Deal as a "temperament" is not dealing with absolutes but with shades of psychological meaning, and an understanding of this meaning can clarify our knowledge of the New Deal period. Hofstadter's ability to move from one field of social science to another in historical research has the net effect of creating a brighter, sharper, more plausible photograph of influential men of the past. Whole areas of history are brought more clearly into focus and long-term contradictions break down.

Stanley Elkins, thoroughly understanding methods and concepts from the fields of sociology, anthropology, and psychology, applies them to the age-old problem of slavery, making an entirely new hypothesis possible. Elkins may not have found the answer, nor would he claim he had, but by his brilliantly suggestive interpretation, dealing with such concepts as "shock," "detachment," "father-image," and "closed authority system," he points a way in a direction not taken before. He lifts the problem out of the rusty, decaying well in which it has lain for so many years. By placing this problem in an entirely new context, Elkins demonstrates that a plausible answer may be found, after all.

Eric McKittrick looks at Andrew Johnson, not as a god or as a devil, but as a man. By understanding the psychology of war and peace and the importance of psychic symbols, McKittrick brings forth an interpretation of a man and the events which he influenced that is brilliantly perceptive and sensitive. With an understanding of Andrew Johnson and the reactions to him by both the North and South as the victors and the vanquished, the mystery of those years fades away and the veil lifts. Thus, McKittrick uses the construction and hypotheses of the social sciences to unlock historical secrets previously untouched by documentary research.

Marvin Meyers, by reading the Jacksonian age as a persuasion, as a series of appeals to morals and virtues, sets an entirely different tone to a much-researched area. His knowledge of the behavioral sciences enables him to examine symbols, intentions, attitudes, shadings of feelings, values and emotional commitment in what emerges as an extremely perceptive and imaginative commentary. Using new techniques of studying political behavior, he extracts the social values of a whole people. With skill and sensitivity, he works with the Jacksonian mystique in a manner not evident in previous research.

Lee Benson, an expert in empirical social research as well as an imaginative historian, uses sociological methods to challenge and to question a whole array of historical hypotheses. He examines a problem, asks of it a clear answerable question, and then proceeds with quantitative scientific analysis to answer this question in a manner that is usually in complete opposition to commonly-held ideas. He subjects many areas of historical fact to scientific inquiry and points the way to

application of these techniques to the whole stream of research in American history. If Benson is right, and if he gains the attention of other historians who see validity in his approach and promise in his methods, his contributions may have more lasting meaning and value than those of the other four. Benson does not say that every historian must quantify all his findings. He says that none have quantified any, and Benson's findings, more than any of the other five, emphasize the inaccuracies and fictions that surround so much of what is now considered historical fact.

By learning from these five men, historians can hope in the future to improve historical research by accomplishing two things not generally evident in the past: first, to clean up the research process by gaining the most complete factual knowledge possible about events which have already taken place; and second, to work toward a more complete understanding of human and social processes in general by enlarging the knowledge of present and future events through empirically devised inquiries and experiments. This kind of research can drive historians to criticize their assumptions, to expose their premises, to tighten their logic, to limit their generalizations, to widen their theoretical base, to utilize proven research and analytic tools originated in other disciplines. I would suggest that from such changes, the complacent historical discipline may experience some rather severe shocks, but such shocks can produce greater truth. These changes, then, exemplify the desired impact of the methods of the five men studied on American historiography.

If historians draw back from the unknown and hesitate at these unfamiliar doors, those who do understand and realize what is at stake have a dedicated task of education. In this instance, familiarity might breed acceptance rather than contempt. If a research task using interdisciplinary methods is too prodigious for one man to undertake, the team approach, another "borrowed" concept, could be inaugurated in the field of historical research. Historians may jealously guard their "corner on the market" of "independent" research but even with the use of traditional methods, the mistrust of cooperative action is unrealistic.

The historical synthesis doomed to failure by T. Harry Williams can be achieved from a greater range and depth of facts and ideas than now available.

However, surprisingly perhaps, I wish to set some limits. My concern has been with the abundance of legend, myth and falsehoods that abound in the concepts of American history, and with the not very promising probable impact of the approaches suggested by the five men studied. The impact desired is that of challenging historians to move out of their musty leather chairs into an academic world where interdisciplinary cooperation is essential. This is not in any way to be construed as an exhortation to historians to abandon historical method and substitute completely those approaches of the behavioral sciences. The resulting situation would be as unsatisfactory as the present one.

The danger is always present that assumptions will be made that quantitative research provides the only way to solve significant

problems, and, even further, that things which quantitative research can not handle, do not matter. However, scientific research will not answer every historical question. Knowledge of the behavioral sciences will not unlock every historical mystery. Much must be left to the unscientific narrative method of the professional historian. Thus, as an aid to the understanding of human beings, the comprehension and use of interdisciplinary methods and knowledge is indispensable. However, as a total means of explaining human or social behavior, social research is profoundly incomplete. The historian as a humanist is part poet, novelist, painter, theologian, philosopher, politician, and his approach will continue to yield truth about individual and social experience which no scientific method has yet been able to develop.

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