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THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY  
OF WALTER LIPPMANN

by

Dan McIntyre

B.A., University of Montana, 1974

Presented in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Interdisciplinary Studies

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1983

Approved by:

  
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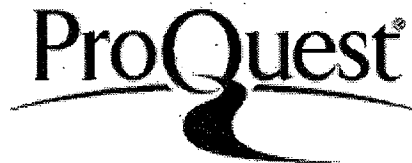


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Interdisciplinary Studies  
(Political Economy)

The Political Philosophy of Walter Lippmann (96 pp.)

Director: Ron Perrin, Professor of Political Theory *RP*

The major tensions in the political philosophy of Walter Lippmann are not difficulties unique to him. Instead, Lippmann's work reflects deep-seated tensions within the American tradition. These tensions are: (1) Standards cannot be set solely by reference to either the material or the ideal realm. Instead, the two realms must be continually related and an always changing equilibrium struck between them. (2) Modernity (which could be summarized as liberalism, capitalism and the scientific outlook) is a double-edged sword: It provides and protects, yet it also corrodes and alienates. Modernity makes a nation wealthy and powerful, but corrupts its citizenry with expediency, opportunism and drift. The modern citizen typically adopts a non-teleological view of the universe, yet retains a teleological view of human existence. (3) There is no settled view of human nature, of the needs and desires of humanity. Human nature is at one point regarded as innately opposed to civil order, while at another it is the very foundation of the highest values of civility. The acquisitive, self-interested and domineering individual is lauded in one setting but condemned in another.

Lippmann's work guides political thinkers to these issues, issues that remain unresolved today. Lippmann's attempt to resolve these matters was not satisfactory, primarily because he approached these problems with a foregone preference for the existing order. He preferred hierarchy and stability to equality and change. Standing against idealists and radicals, he assigned primacy to the past, rather than the future. He searched not for meaning or purpose; instead, he sought authority. He saw the unresolved tensions of American political philosophy not as questions in need of answers but as the burning call for the establishment of an authority that could resolve disruptions caused by these tensions. He searched for an authority that would be vested in the hands of an elite which was dedicated to the gentle treatment of the status quo.

For Judy Ann McIntyre

The glance of an ideal love is terrible and glorious,  
foreboding death and immortality together.

-- George Santayana

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## INTRODUCTION

Walter Lippmann was neither a political theorist nor a philosopher, according to his preeminent biographer, Ronald Steel. Of Lippmann's most famous works of political philosophy, Steel has this to say: **The Good Society** is plagued by "confusion;"<sup>1</sup> **Essays in the Public Philosophy** never overcomes "a disturbing vagueness."<sup>2</sup> "Lippmann's great talent lay in analysis and explanation, not in theorizing," states Steel.<sup>3</sup> Again, referring to **The Public Philosophy**, which many of Lippmann's readers had hoped would be his definitive work, Steel concludes: "He could analyze situations with finesse and give off brilliant flashes of illumination. Yet when he tried to use these powers to mold a coherent philosophy, he stumbled...."<sup>4</sup> Lippmann, states Steel, "did not form patterns like a philosopher."<sup>5</sup>

This thesis supports Steel's contention that Lippmann's work was contradictory. Section I shows that Lippmann, on the one hand, condemned Marxist determinism as "fatalistic," yet, on the other, espoused the "inexorable historic necessity" of his own theory of economic determinism. Section II shows that Lippmann argued both that natural law provides normative principles and that natural law is simply the sum of those principles necessary for order and convenience. Section II also documents Lippmann's transition from one who believed there are no eternal principles to one who argued for the existence of objectively knowable moral



truths. Section III finds yet another twist to Lippmann's thought. It shows that in **Public Opinion** Lippmann argues that it is impossible, in principle, for humans to know the world as it really is. Instead of knowing objective reality, people create and act upon a continually revised, counterfeit reality.

Yet, despite these major difficulties (and this thesis exposes several others), Lippmann is nonetheless ranked among the prominent American political philosophers. Clinton Rossiter and James Lare, for instance, hold that Lippmann was "first of all a political thinker," "a person of immense influence in clarifying the values and shaping the policies of two generations of Americans." Are Rossiter and Lare simply wrong when they describe Lippmann as a thinker "who speaks not only to the living but also to generations unborn" on the "ethical and social problems that have been with us in the West from the beginning and will be with us to the end...."?<sup>6</sup>

This thesis proposes that one can accept the philosophical shortcomings of Walter Lippmann and still find him a political philosopher. This is true because the problems in the political philosophy of Walter Lippmann reflect problems in American political thought.

The politics of Lippmann, like the politics of much of America, is conservative in its view of human nature, yet liberal in its faith in human institutions; it is absolutist in its faith in the rule of law, yet materialist and relativist in its view of history and society.

In Lippmann's ideas, as in America's, the essential parts do not always fit. Lippmann, for instance, had a love-hate relationship with modernity. He did not deny its potency and munificence as the provider for humanity. The scientific method and the division of labor brought wealth and power, he argued, strengthening a nation against its external enemies. Yet, Lippmann also warned that modernity made a nation's citizens vulnerable to attack from within: Where there should be citizens with shared values and goals, there are ethical weaklings or self-righteous bullies, and there is a pervasive anomie. Where there should be leadership, there is expediency, opportunism and drift.

Lippmann would have suffered modernity's eclipse of the values of the past, had modernity produced satisfactory values of its own. But he was convinced that it did not, and that left him nowhere to turn. When one distrusts the future, as Lippmann did, and lives among people who disavow their past, as Americans do, there is no refuge from the present, there is no source of strength other than the present.

If Lippmann had believed modernity could bring into being a new humanity, if he had not concluded that human nature is innately opposed to civil order, then perhaps he would have found a redemptive future anticipated in the present. If Lippmann had found a clear set of shared ideals among the American people, then perhaps he could have made his argument for civility in secular and human terms, instead of resorting to divinity.

Lippmann had difficulties perceiving shared ideals among the American people because his own ideals were so problematic. Lippmann aimed to avoid dogmatism -- and to a certain extent, idealism -- because he believed it would cut him off from the changing environment. Steel's biography of Lippmann is indeed the chronicle of a realist who tried to adjust his ideals to the qualitative and quantitative changes of "the American century." To Lippmann, preserving the capacity to adjust to changing circumstances is the key to being a "progressive."

Yet, no matter how frequently he adjusted his views of social reality, no matter how willing he was "to jettison old ideas as soon as new ones were at hand,"<sup>7</sup> Lippmann succumbed to the pressure to freeze some basic parts of his world view. This resulted in the conservative determinism examined in Section I. His open-ended pragmatism solidified, despite his avowed intentions.

Those supporters of Lippmann who see no philosophical inadequacies in his work have subconsciously closed one eye to problems like these. Where Lippmann saw necessity, universality and morality, they see the same. They do not question the fit between his historicism and his absolutism, between his pragmatism and his natural law. They accept his a priori understandings. Like him, they have reified certain aspects of the existing order.

Those critics who dwelled on the philosophical shortcomings and inconsistencies in Lippmann's work were, from his

perspective, missing the point. He regarded the intricacies of intellectual work as far removed from the realities of politics: "For what operates in history is not the systematic idea as genius framed it, but shifting imitations, replicas, counterfeits, analogies, and distortions in individual minds."<sup>8</sup>

Lippmann is partially correct in this assessment of the American public -- it does judge ideas by their consequences, not by their theoretical niceties. However, as Lippmann learned later in his life, that sort of pragmatic attitude should not be blindly encouraged: To do so is most likely to result in a complete denial of the ideal, to do so is to further cynicism and decay.

To a large extent, the philosophical lapses, the turn-about and the internal inconsistencies of Lippmann's work can be attributed to his pragmatic desire for a tight fit between the ideal and the real. As shown in Sections I and III, Lippmann tended to achieve this fit by bending the ideal to the real, not vice versa. In **Public Opinion**, in particular, he flatly denied the significance and the constancy of the ideal. As Sections I and III show, Lippmann believed the real, not the ideal, is what endures -- endures not in its specific embodiments, but endures as a massive causal force, as an entity which overwhelmingly outweighs the ideal.

On the balance, however, Lippmann -- like America -- never entirely abandons the ideal. Steel is correct when he states:

He was a skeptic who yearned for an overvaulting sense of order he feared did not exist.... He was a realist who never quite suppressed his youthful romanticism and idealism -- qualities that saved him from negativism and cynicism in his old age.<sup>9</sup>

The same could be said of America's wellspring of idealism: It is not even close to running dry. Those leaders with the most powerful followings always draw heavily upon it. If the body politic is to be moved, both its idealistic and its realistic sides must be touched. There are, of course, those who cynically manipulate the idealistic side of the American character, justifying self-serving police actions in the Caribbean and Central America, for example, with statements about preserving the abstract freedom of America's neighbors. As such rhetoric indicates, the content of America's ideals remains totally unsettled.

This is where the work of political philosophers (and historians and humanists in general) becomes crucially important. In this respect, Lippmann's work is disturbing: He operates under a foreshortened understanding of the ideal, and he is all too willing to abandon even this truncated view of the ideal. Lippmann remained idealistic, for example, not about human nature, but about humanity's ability to repress and contain human nature. As is discussed in Section II, he grew increasingly pessimistic about the gut stuff of humanity, referring to "our natural and uncivilized selves,"<sup>10</sup> and to "the primitive and persistent impulse to dominate, to submit, to stand in awe of

power and to seek its protection."<sup>11</sup> As is shown in Section III, his doctrine of natural law is founded not on the natural impulses of humanity, but on what he saw as the need to civilize those impulses. From this outlook it is merely a short step to Lippmann's egoistic, elitist social view. He prescribed heavyhanded institutions to keep the uncivilized multitudes in check. Since he regarded the natural individual as aggressive, selfish and immature, he saw the masses as a destructive force that must be contained, not as a redemptive force to be liberated. The exceptional few, the moral and intellectual elite, would be the caretakers of the relatively static institutional restraints placed upon the masses.

This conservative view of human nature is not, obviously, the only outlook found in American political theory. There are those, and the younger and more liberal Lippmann was among them, who regard humanity's natural desires as potentially positive forces. Young Lippmann believed that the natural yearnings of people should be satisfied, that liberal institutions should strive to fulfill human desires. Yet Lippmann's view of this process omitted a crucial step. He gave no philosophical attention to the ideal fruit for which liberal institutions reach. This is, perhaps, the greatest shortcoming of Lippmann (and of American political thought, as it is developed by him). He failed in what Santayana calls "turning the friction of material forces into the light of ideal goods."<sup>12</sup> He denied the natural, animal basis of the loftiest attainments of humanity. As

a young liberal, Lippmann accepted the desires of people -- but he thought they should be satisfied directly, in the material world; he ignored the abstract and spiritual goal of those desires. As an old conservative, Lippmann found an ideal in his doctrine of natural law, but it was an ideal chosen explicitly because it was irreconcilably opposed to the natural desires of humanity. Either way, Lippmann had nowhere meaningful to go. He was without the guidance of substantial ideals.

Given his outlook he had no way to connect the natural desires of humanity to its most sublime ideals -- particularly to ideals such as love. For Lippmann, ideals like love must remain bound to the material world. There is no resurrection or immortality possible for them. Their object is hopelessly grounded in the real world.

As will be evident below, Lippmann should be remembered more for his voyage than for the particular destinations that he reached. He explored and reflected tensions deep within American political thought. That he elucidated so many tensions is no mean feat. That he failed to resolve them is not grounds to dismiss him as a thinker. He did sincerely desire to make of them a single piece. That he clung too tightly to the past and the present, to the material and the real, is indeed a failure -- but it is a failure that is understandable, given the context of mainstream American political thought.

It should not be forgotten that Lippmann argued for philosophy, not simply because he believed it to be a pleasant

accompaniment to private life, but because he believed it to be a necessary aspect of public life. It is the task of others to continue this argument, and in so doing, to find the resurrection that Lippmann denied.



## I. ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

### - A. Introduction

It is axiomatic among academics that there is no surer way for a foe to deliver himself to his enemies than for him to write a book. Lippmann, who put more than ten million words in print, never denied his critics their deliverance. Of the lot, there was one book so rife with difficulties that it served his critics at least as well as his admirers. The book, The Good Society (1937), brought predictable derision from the "left." Lewis Mumford (a target of Lippmann's anti-collectivism) found within The Good Society "confusions and contradictions...so massive as to be intellectually discreditable in a man of his attainments."<sup>1</sup> John Dewey thought the book gave "encouragement and practical support to reactionaries" and described it as "liberalism in a vacuum."<sup>2</sup>

Lippmann's biographer Ronald Steel, who also used the words "confusion" and "contradictions" to describe the book, said it suffered a "split personality."<sup>3</sup> On its face, Steel's description is correct; however, as will be shown, there is a strong theme throughout the book, a theme which Steel's interpretation obscures.

The first part of The Good Society argued that all collectivism -- which, as Lippmann defined it, included

communism, fascism, and the New Deal -- is inherently totalitarian because it requires economic planning.<sup>4</sup>

In sharp contrast, the second part of The Good Society was nothing less than an enthusiastic primer for interventionist, welfare state liberalism. Lippmann, stated Steel, "drew up a blueprint -- including public works, social insurance, and the abolition of monopolies -- that was not very different from what FDR had been trying to achieve with the New Deal."<sup>5</sup> Dicey, Mises and von Hayek, all of whom Lippmann cited approvingly in the first half of the book, would have been appalled by Lippmann's conclusion.

Early in The Good Society Lippmann stated, "To the liberal mind, the notion that men can authoritatively plan and impose a good life upon a great society is ignorant, impertinent and pretentious."<sup>6</sup> Collectivism is a throwback, he argued; it necessarily accompanies an earlier mode of production. Modern industrial production requires a division of labor and a market economy, neither of which is compatible, he asserted, with collectivism or planning. The state can force collectivism upon a modern society, but such an arrangement will only temporarily postpone the inevitable. Collectivism is doomed to pass away. This process, Lippmann insisted in The Good Society, is a "truly inexorable historic necessity."<sup>7</sup>

Steel disagreed pointedly with Lippmann's economic explanation of totalitarianism. "His analysis," Steel charged, "assumed that economic collectivism produced totalitarianism,

when, in fact, it was the other way around."<sup>8</sup> Lippmann kept looking for the economic basis, wrote Steel, because "he wanted to believe that political and economic liberalism went hand in hand."<sup>9</sup>

Steel, who seemed determined to offer his own views of totalitarianism (he claimed its roots lie in "the emotional appeal of mass movements with their mass loyalties and mass enthusiasms"),<sup>10</sup> passed right over a crucial distinction: Walter Lippmann did not "want to believe that political and economic liberalism went hand in hand," he believed it. More specifically, Lippmann argued repeatedly that political and civic liberty were brought into being by economic liberalism. In A Preface to Morals (1929) he stated:

our great-grandfathers....found themselves in a world regulated by the customs and beliefs of a landed society. They could not operate their factories successfully in such a society, and they rebelled fiercely against the customs which restricted them. That rebellion was rationalized in the philosophy of laissez-faire which meant in essence that machine industry must not be interfered with by landlords and peasants who had feudal rights, nor by governments which protected those rights. On the positive side this rebellion expressed itself in declarations of the rights of man. These declarations were a denial of the vested rights of men under the old landed order and an assertion of the rights of men, particularly the new middle-class men, who proposed to make the most of the new industrial and mechanical order.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, in The Good Society Lippmann wrote that the "ideal of equal and certain laws," a bulwark of modern liberalism, "is hardly conceivable in an age of small, self-sufficient communities."<sup>12</sup> As these two examples indicate, it can be shown that a powerful economic

determinism underlay the political philosophy of Walter Lippmann.

Steel failed his readers by refusing to explore Lippmann's position on this issue. Every time Lippmann's determinism became so pronounced that Steel could not ignore it, he briefly noted Lippmann's contention, rebutted it, then passed on to another topic. Lippmann argued in A Preface to Morals, according to Steel, "that fascism and Bolshevism resulted from the 'breakdown of a somewhat primitive form of capitalism.'" Eight years later in The Good Society Lippmann, in Steel's words, "had modified his argument to put the blame for totalitarianism on collectivism rather than on industrial backwardness. But he still sought the cause in economics."<sup>13</sup> Instead of pursuing the matter, Steel dismissed it, saying that Lippmann did not understand "the emotional appeal of either fascism or communism.... In truth the appeal of authoritarianism reflected a side of human nature he was loath to recognize."<sup>14</sup> Steel's interpretation belied all that he wrote about Lippmann's insistence upon the irrational aspects of humanity. Furthermore, Steel ignored the fact that Lippmann explicitly argued in The Method of Freedom that that the economy created the emotional, herdlike masses that Steel claimed Lippmann did not acknowledge: "This submerging of individualism in mass behavior is the consequence of the increasing complexity of the economic order."<sup>15</sup> Lippmann also argued in The Method of Freedom that the loss of

economic security during the Depression drove men to an "overwhelming passion...." "The surrender of liberty, the disenchantment with democracy, the revival of autocracy," all are manifestations of the desire to bring stability to the world economy.<sup>16</sup>

Although Lippmann's economic determinism had its internal inconsistencies, it was a consistent feature of his work. In Drift and Mastery he stated that the "desire for self-government" arose "with the accumulation of a great surplus of wealth.... It wasn't easy to think much of the possibilities of this world while he [man] lived on the edge of starvation."<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere in the same book he maintained that only when society has emerged from "a fear economy" will people be able to live in security and happiness.<sup>18</sup> In The Good Society he argued that the social order must be adapted "to the economy brought into being by the industrial revolution...."<sup>19</sup>

In the broadest terms Lippmann's economic determinism held that the mode of production (a) proceeds through definite historical stages and (b) is the locus of certain relations that determine the scope of human affairs, particularly political, cultural and intellectual affairs.

Since one thinker's name dominates all discussion of this interpretation of history and society, it is necessary -- before proceeding -- to examine Lippmann's views of that man who was born in Trier, Prussia, 71 years before Lippmann was born on Lexington Avenue in New York City.

B. The Name That Launched a Thousand Arguments

In the course of his work, Lippmann quoted and paraphrased arguments and observations from an extremely broad range of sources: classical philosophers, their translators and interpreters, political theorists and activists, psychoanalysts, novelists, economists, social critics and theologians, artists and art critics, biographers, historians, poets and politicians. His was an impressively eclectic, restless bibliography.

Among all these sources, one figure was treated most curiously. This person appeared repeatedly in the text of Lippmann's major books, disappeared for a while, then tirelessly returned for another engagement. The person was Karl Marx. His ideas were the springboard that launched many a Lippmann argument: When Marx went down, Lippmann went up. Yet for all of this, there was a conscious refusal to treat Marx's ideas systematically.<sup>20</sup> The "Marxian tradition" and a few selected quotes hover throughout the text -- from Lippmann's first major book to the last -- but Marx himself was never treated seriously:

For the study of politics I should say unhesitatingly that it is more important to know what socialist leaders, stump speakers, pamphleteers, think Marx meant, than to know what he said. For then you are dealing with living ideas.<sup>21</sup>

It could be argued that his statement was nothing more than the tip of Lippmann's pragmatist view of the world. He judged ideas not by the purity of their pedigree or elegance of argument, but by their consequences. That would be a plausible explanation, but Marx was the only major thinker

dismissed in this fashion by Lippmann. Lippmann did not suggest that it is more important to know what the people of Athens thought of Aristotle than to know what Aristotle himself said. The same claim, if made about the authors of The Federalist or other seminal works of American political theory, would be hooted out of the ballpark of political science. (This is not to deny that the received view of a thinker plays an important role in a full understanding, but it is to say that without the original text there is nothing to understand, no basis for subsequent interpretation and clarification.)

Lippmann's attitude reduced Marx's work to a sort of assumption. What was taken for granted by Lippmann, the reader never knows. Steel reported that the young Lippmann "read The Communist Manifesto and some of Karl Marx's shorter essays," but disliked what he found there.<sup>22</sup> From this and Lippmann's extremely limited references to specific passages in Marx and Engels, one might safely conclude that Lippmann based his tireless critique (and mis-plagiarism?) on a minute introduction to the actual thing.

#### C. Lippmann's Attack on Marx's Economic Determinism

Lippmann's critique of Marx began in A Preface to Politics, his first book. He reduced Marxism to two concepts: First, "we are the creatures of economic conditions," and second, "a war of classes is being fought everywhere in which the proletariat will ultimately capture the industrial

machinery and produce a sound economic life as the basis of peace and happiness for all."<sup>23</sup> The "singlemindedness" of the Marxist approach "has done good service." It has "helped men to think socially," turned their attention from the romantic view of history and "engendered a fine concern about average people, about the voiceless multitudes who have been left to pass unnoticed."<sup>24</sup> This constituted the essence and nearly the entirety of Lippmann's complimentary remarks about Marx. (The young Lippmann, riding high perhaps on his brief fling with the avant garde of Greenwich Village, referred to Marx as the political thinker who had exercised the greatest influence in the western world.)

In A Preface to Politics Lippmann denounced "economic determinism" as a "disastrous" creed "when it comes time to act.... You are likely to wait for something to determine you. Personal initiative and individual genius are poorly regarded."<sup>25</sup> Further, "the philosophy of class warfare.... can be effective only so long as the working class is without sovereignty. But no sooner has it achieved power than a new outlook is needed in order to know what to do with it...."<sup>26</sup>

In Public Opinion Lippmann assailed the "economic interpretation of history" as an "instinctive fatalism...."<sup>27</sup> He claimed that Marxism errs when it claims "that men's economic position would irresistibly produce a clear conception of their economic interests."<sup>28</sup> That is wrong, argued Lippmann, because "nothing is more certain than that all classes of



men are in constant perplexity as to what their interests are."<sup>29</sup>

Before proceeding, it must be made clear that Lippmann reduced "economic determinism" to a very narrow concern. Gone was Marx's argument about the historical development of the modes of production, gone was Marx's dialectical relationship between the base and superstructure.<sup>30</sup> Reading Lippmann's text symptomatically, one might hypothesize that this omission indicates Lippmann's basic acceptance of these points. As will be shown, this hypothesis finds supportive evidence in Lippmann's later works.

Lippmann's critique of economic determinism focused exclusively on what might be called vulgar Marxian psychology. If Marx and Lenin were correct, wrote Lippmann, economic position ought to not only "divide mankind into classes, but to supply each class with a view of its interest and a coherent policy for obtaining it."<sup>31</sup> This notion, Lippmann said, rests on the mistaken Marxian assumption

that men are capable of adopting only one version of their interest, and having adopted it, they move fatally to realize it.... That assumption is false. A class interest can be conceived largely or narrowly, selfishly or unselfishly, in the light of no facts, some facts, many facts, truth and error.<sup>32</sup>

"A man's various economic contacts," wrote Lippmann, "limit or enlarge the range of his opinions. But which of the contacts, in what guise, on what theory, the materialistic conception of politics cannot predict."<sup>33</sup>

Lippmann acknowledged that a "man's various economic contacts limit or enlarge the range of his opinions," and he agreed with the notion that men who work at machines will tend to interpret experience differently from handicraftsmen or traders. He agreed that James Madison was correct in saying in Federalist No. 10 that men are divided into factions "by their relation to property." However, Lippmann continued, Madison "does not say that their property and their opinions are cause and effect, but that differences of property are the causes of differences of opinion." There are many other causes of opinion.<sup>34</sup>

Lippmann's attack on "economic determinism," therefore, can be reduced to two major contentions: (1) Since Lippmann believed there is no such thing as a direct and unvarying connection between reality and human response (this contention is explored in Section III), he maintained that it is factually wrong to claim that the economy directly determines action or opinion. Instead, individuals adjust their actions or opinions in response to their individual experience of the environment. Since individuals' experience differ, Lippmann maintained at this point that the experience of the economic environment does not override the experience of other aspects of the environment. (2) Once people have perceived their interest, "how they shall pursue it is not fatally determined...."<sup>35</sup> To believe that men will innately pursue a certain end is to believe that men possess what James called the "faculty of

acting in such a way as to produce certain ends, without foresight of the ends and without previous education in the performance."<sup>36</sup>

Lippmann believed, therefore, that "Marxian" determinism counseled a fatalistic aloofness from the struggles of the day.

...Karl Marx...undertakes to assure them, on the ground of his dialectic, that the struggle between capitalist and proletarian is the final conflict, that the issue is rigid, the result pre-determined, and that under communism man will 'leap from the kingdom of necessity to that of freedom'....<sup>37</sup>

People who prefer to trust destiny, "a quick one or a slow one," only seek to avoid "the whole task of judging events...." It is their aim "to escape the real effort of the imagination which is to weave a dream into the turning present."<sup>38</sup> What these people avoid is the development of self-consciousness, the variable that determines whether people are "the victims or masters of change."<sup>39</sup>

Those with "self-consciousness," then, are charged with a special responsibility. They must apply themselves, not to the distant, utopian future, but to that graspable point at which today turns into tomorrow. This raises a distinction which troubled Lippmann repeatedly when he proposed solutions to the problems of the day. Given the limits he placed on human knowledge, and given his belief that the future is, in James's phrase, pregnant with "iffs," how far should the individual or society go in judgments about the issues of the present? To not step in is fatalism. To step in with

undue certainty is to attempt the impossible, for men's actions are merely interpositions in the flow of reality. To believe that one has imagined the future is to foreclose unforeseen possibilities. "In each child that is born there are possibilities which no one can foresee.... That is why liberty is one of the conditions of human progress," wrote Lippmann. "Without it the dead hand of the past is forever upon the future."<sup>40</sup>

The political philosophy of Edmund Burke -- of whom Lippmann thought highly -- resonates throughout the views of Lippmann here: There is a stolid resistance to any change which is not founded on current circumstances and their direct needs. The limits of purposive activity, in Lippmann's view, must be near at hand, lest one group -- or generation -- claim a lofty role in history that pre-empts a future generation or destroys the contribution of a past generation. Fear of such purposive activity, it could be said, prompted Lippmann to resort to his own, peculiarly quietistic, economic determinism.

#### D. The Inexorable Economic Determinism of Walter Lippmann

The introduction to this section stated that the economic determinism of Walter Lippmann consisted of the following broad beliefs: The mode of production (a) proceeds through definite historical stages and (b) is the locus of certain relations that determine the scope of human affairs, particularly political, cultural and legal affairs.

Although the shape of Lippmann's determinism resembled a vulgar reading of Marx, Lippmann's specific categories were typically mirror opposites of Marx's: To Lippmann, the proletariat was an unstable, potentially destructive force; the property-owning middle class, in his estimation, was the progressive force. Lippmann believed a stable, prosperous society would necessarily be based on the private ownership of property, exemplified by the middle class life of modern capitalist countries.

Throughout human history, contended Lippmann, there has been an evolution or historical progression from one technique of production to another. The industrial age was preceded by handicraft production, the "tillage of settled agriculturists" by the "pastoral pursuits of nomadic tribes...."<sup>41</sup> Each productive technology brought into being an accompanying mode of production or form of economic organization. Slavery, feudalism and laissez faire capitalism are all stages in the development of the mode of production. The industrial revolution has "brought into being" a "new mode of production," which is characterized by "the division of labor among interdependent communities and individuals. This is the truly inexorable historic necessity."<sup>42</sup>

Nothing can prevent the whole of mankind from being drawn out of its ancestral isolation into the world-wide economy of interdependent specialists. For the new mode of production is incomparably more efficient in the struggle for survival. The men who adopt it not only grow wealthier than those who do not, but they overrun and dominate those who do not.<sup>43</sup>

The distinguishing accomplishment of the division of labor was the lifting of mankind beyond "a meagre and self-sufficing existence."<sup>44</sup>

Productive technology, continued Lippmann, eventually shapes not only the mode of production but all other institutions and even human nature itself. The irresistible progress of the mode of production has disrupted "state, law, property, family, church, human conscience, conceptions of right and wrong, of status, of expectation, of need...."<sup>45</sup> This "social heritage" has yet to catch up with the mode of production, and thus there is "rebellion against the world or renunciation of the world."<sup>46</sup> Since the industrial revolution

requires not only an alteration of the economy but a readaptation of human nature and of usage, it will be a long time before men have caught up with their changing circumstances and have acquired the necessary knowledge to remake their habits and their institutions accordingly.<sup>47</sup>

Lippmann called the way of life brought into being by the industrial revolution "liberalism." (Though he took up the cause of liberalism in The Good Society, it is important to remember that Lippmann was -- in other works -- frightened and repelled by the consequences of liberalism.) "Behind the liberal philosophy is the whole force of man's commitment to the economy of the division of labor...." The "necessities of the mode of production" compel men to discover and establish "the essential principles of a liberal society."<sup>48</sup>

One of the necessities of the modern mode of production is the protection and utilization of individual genius. For, Lippmann wrote, individual acts of invention and discovery drive forward the technology of production. By freeing the genius from the all-consuming demands of self-sufficiency, the division of labor allows the genius to expand human knowledge. Because others grew the food that, in Lippmann's example, Galileo ate; because others made the clothes he wore, Galileo was freed to study the heavens and earth. To do so he needed not only the division of labor but the protection of liberalism, for the multitudes -- the others within the division of labor -- constituted a threat to his work. Their irrational desires may have conflicted with his work, and -- if they were not restrained -- brought it to a halt. "When a Galileo is coerced by a more powerful but a more ignorant inquisitor, his scientific genius is arbitrarily leveled down to the obscurantism of his masters."<sup>49</sup> To Lippmann the more powerful but more ignorant inquisitor may be an individual tyrant or an absolutist cabal or a mob, but in modern society it is most likely to be a duly constituted majority. Lippmann's liberalism forbade political interference -- by the majority or otherwise -- with the division of labor.

Lippmann gave society no substantive purpose or overriding goal -- beyond the preservation of the division of labor and the individual freedoms which it created. This is Lippmann's chimera: The individual is free -- free to adjust

to the elite-imposed definition of reality, free to adjust to the compulsion of the economy, free to pursue the objective truth, which is the truth that is workable within the existing structure.

According to Lippmann, only liberalism is suitable to the industrial society. "There is no choice" between liberalism and any other way of life

because men are committed to the division of labor, and it is as impossible for them to live by any other means as it was for their ancestors in the villages clustered around regional market towns to exist without a high degree of self-sufficiency.<sup>50</sup>

The "apparent choice" between the liberal order and any other way of life is "subjective;"<sup>51</sup> it "exists only in the mind.... The choice does not exist when they [men] come to find out what they can do."<sup>52</sup>

Although maladjustments exist between liberalism and the industrial mode of production,

There is no reason to think that the time has come when the social order cannot adapt itself to the economy brought into being by the industrial revolution, and that, therefore, men must destroy the new economy. For that would mean that the industrial revolution itself had come to a dead end.<sup>59</sup>



Lippmann's conclusion, thus, was a simple and -- from the viewpoint of the existing economy -- optimistic one. Until industrial productive forces have been fully developed, the social order must adapt itself to the existing mode of production. When there is no more room for development, the social order will no longer be able to adapt itself to the mode of production. That point has not been reached, and, according to all the evidence Lippmann saw, it is far, far in the future.

The economic determinism of Walter Lippmann was, then, a philosophy that counseled individuals to allow the unfolding of the status quo and to trust in the decisions delivered by the market.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Marx, who found the potential of the future alive within the present, Lippmann found the present bound securely to the past. Lippmann's determinism was conservative because the present and the past, rather than the future, were assigned causal force and primacy.

#### **E. Leap from the Kingdom of Necessity to More Necessity**

Lippmann held that it is not conscious choice but the inexorable progress of the technology of production that determines the mode of production. The consequences of the industrial revolution, for instance, cannot be reversed "by an act of will" or political coercion...."<sup>61</sup> The existing mode of production will be transformed only by a revolutionary change in the technology of production.

Until invention, which is as yet not even within the speculative possibilities, creates a more efficient and radically different method of producing wealth, mankind is committed to the division of labor in a market economy.<sup>62</sup>

Given this view, it was wise of Lippmann to offer an instrumental justification for the economy. It was wise because, according to the standard position on such matters, an end that is inexorably determined cannot at the same time be a properly ethical end. Therefore, an instrumental justification wins by default. Lippmann justified the modern mode of production on the grounds it is "incomparably more efficient," i.e., those who adopt it grow "wealthier" and "overrun and dominate those who do not."<sup>63</sup> **The Good Society** consistently adhered to this argument.

...the basic economy of the division of labor regulated in markets is a mode of production, like village agriculture or pastoral nomadism. Men may like it or dislike it. That is an aesthetic preference, such as preferring the life of a hunter or a shepherd to that of a farmer or a factory worker. But a mode of production cannot be judged to be fundamentally just or unjust.<sup>64</sup>

In short, Lippmann described the economy as an amoral, seemingly autonomous entity. Lippmann described the economy as neither the conscious creation of individuals nor the work of some recognized social authority. Thus, since economic compulsion is not willed by any group or individual, Lippmann did not regard it as the exercise of arbitrary authority.

Despite all the determinism Lippmann built into his society,

he left one entry point for free choice -- the "subjective" choice between liberalism and any other way of life.<sup>65</sup> Objectively, there is no choice as to which way of life is suited to the modern mode of production. There is, however, a choice that "exists only in the mind...."<sup>66</sup> That is enough of a basis, Lippmann believed, upon which to erect a standard of justice. The adjustment of the legal, political and cultural institutions to the mode of production can be judged in ethical terms, he claimed. "Questions of justice can arise...out of maladjustment of laws, institutions, education, and social custom to a particular mode of production."<sup>67</sup>

Liberalism, Lippmann maintained, adjusts the "laws, institutions, education, and social custom" to the "mode of production." Totalitarianism, Lippmann argued, tries to adjust the economy to fit the law, institutions and customs -- but that, he insisted, is impossible: The economy is the determinative force. The modern economy, like the modern environment described in Section III, is too vast, too complex to be understood by humans, let alone consciously controlled. Lippmann held that people consciously adjust the "fictions" of the legal, political and cultural institutions to the economy.

The adjustment of the legal, political and cultural institutions is the personal task of individuals with "a strong desire" and "a growing capacity to be just...." They must be guided by moral standards which discourage the quest for privilege and the exercise of arbitrary power.<sup>68</sup> Their goal is a

free society in which inequalities in the condition of men, in their rewards, and in their social status do not arise out of extrinsic and artificial causes -- out of the physical power to coerce, out of legal privilege, out of special prerogative, or out of fraud, sharp practice, necessitous bargaining.<sup>69</sup>

However, within the confines of Lippmann's economic determinism, there existed no moral foundation upon which these individuals could base their judgments. (Section II shows how Lippmann attempted to solve this dilemma by locating objectively knowable values in his doctrine of natural law.) Within Lippmann's economic determinism, no outside point of appeal exists: Lippmann asserted that questions of justice should be resolved according to the standard of the economy. The abolition of poverty, for instance, which the young Lippmann described as "the most immediate question before the world to-day,"<sup>70</sup> should be accomplished by a redistribution of income which preserves "the equilibrium of the exchange economy itself."<sup>71</sup> Redistribution must be accomplished not through a "mere leveling of incomes by taking from the rich and giving doles to the poor," a process which eventually paralyzes and impoverishes the entire economy, but through "measures which promote the efficiency of the markets as regulators of the division of labor...."<sup>72</sup> The "true line of progress is not to impair or to abolish the market, but to maintain and improve it." The "uncompleted task" is "to show how law and public policy may best be adapted to this mode of production...."<sup>73</sup>

Given this circular arrangement, the question must finally be asked: Did Lippmann do anything other than that for which he

denounced Marx? Could one not readily conclude that Lippmann's economic determinism is an "instinctive fatalism," a "disastrous" creed "when it comes time to act?"

## II. NATURAL LAW

"Like a harlot," states Danish philosopher Alf Ross, "natural law is at the disposal of everyone. The ideology does not exist that cannot be defended by an appeal to the law of nature." Natural law has been used to defend reform, reaction and revolution.

Since Lippmann rejected the belief that what is right is determined by public opinion or by the majority; since he was skeptical about all political dogma; and since he preferred hierarchy and stability to equality and change, it is not surprising that he came to advocate a conservative doctrine of natural law. Not only is the content of Lippmann's natural law conservative, it has authoritarian implications: Lippmann's natural law is knowable only by an elite. "Not everyone," Lippmann states, can know natural law; "most people, presumably, may have heard almost nothing about it."<sup>2</sup>

In broadest terms, natural law -- as distinct from Lippmann's natural law -- can be capsulized as the appeal to God, nature or human nature as the source of objective standards for ethics, politics and law.<sup>3</sup> On the whole (although important exceptions exist), advocates of natural law look for purposes in the world, either of God, humanity or nature. Natural law theorists emphasize reason as humanity's distinguishing characteristic and try to establish a set of moral principles on which rational people can agree.

Lippmann was concerned neither with standard natural law issues, nor with a consistent presentation of his views of natural law. In **The Good Society** and **The Public Philosophy** he made all of the following

epistemological claims, without following any discernible pattern. At times he claimed natural law is what is required for social order and convenience;<sup>4</sup> at times he stated it provides normative principles, it prescribes what behavior "should be."<sup>5</sup> At one point he asserted it is not crucial whether natural law is "the commandment of God or the reason of things...."<sup>6</sup> At another he argued that natural law is a truth "proclaimed by the Christian gospel.... For in the recognition that there is in each man a final essence -- that is to say, an immortal soul -- which only God can judge, a limit was set upon the dominion of men over men."<sup>7</sup> At various other points he maintained natural law is known through experience,<sup>8</sup> through "rational inquiry,"<sup>9</sup> and through intuition.<sup>10</sup> In **The Public Philosophy** he stated, "It is there objectively." Thinkers have agreed, he continued, that it is "not something decided upon by certain men and then proclaimed by them. It was not someone's fancy, someone's prejudice, someone's wish or rationalization, a psychological experience and no more."<sup>11</sup> In **The Good Society** he asserted that "this higher law is...a progressive discovery of men striving to civilize themselves...its scope and implications are a gradual revelation that is by no means completed."<sup>12</sup>

Lippmann's conception of natural law, thus, could be said to be both classical and modern.<sup>13</sup> Attributing it to the classical period, he stated that its discovery "preceded the advance of modern science and the industrial revolution," and that people have acted upon it for "over two thousand years...."<sup>14</sup> Yet in a distinctly modern argument, he stated that the natural law of property was founded on the recognition that certain things "are not provided in unlimited

quantity and without effort."<sup>15</sup> He acknowledged the "new school of natural law, which flourished from about 1500 to 1800," but asserted this school was unable "to cope with the pluralism of the later modern age...."<sup>16</sup> Instead of trying to situate his view amidst classical and modern natural law, he claimed there are "fundamental principles" common to all schools of natural law. These principles are

in Cicero's words, 'law is the bond of civil society,' and that all men, governors and the governed, are always under, are never above, laws; that these laws can be developed and refined by rational discussion, and that the highest laws are those upon which all rational men of good will, when fully informed, will tend to agree.<sup>17</sup>

If one accepts this definition and puts aside the problems with the derivation and substance of Lippmann's natural law, it is possible to develop a **preliminary** sense of the role of Lippmann's natural law. This role could be expressed in terms of a triadic relationship (an heuristic device that Lippmann does not use). There are three determining forces at work in the model: natural law, human nature and circumstance. Lippmann regarded the unchanging part of human nature as basically uncivilized. (This issue is taken up in detail later in this section.) Lippmann described circumstance as almost stationary for those millions of people outside the grasp of modernity, for those people confined to the rhythms of primitive agriculture. With the arrival of the scientific and industrial age, the human environment is set to rocking. New circumstances, new objects, produce new reactions from human impulse. With relentless force, history works "upon the inner springs of being" and inevitably undermines the "premises of



conduct."<sup>18</sup> The triadic relationship loses its balance. The barbaric tide seizes upon one of the three elements and spurns the balance provided by the other two. Those who fixate upon human nature typically believe that people are inherently good and naturally wise. They would build institutions to fulfill people's every desire. They allege that an omniscient citizenry can rule through a pure democracy. (Given Lippmann's pessimistic view of human nature, he believed the actual result of this view is to enflame self-interested desire and empower the will to dominate; totalitarianism is its consequence.) Those who raise circumstance above the other elements are a diverse group; they include those who hold there is no more meaning in existence than the intensity of passing experience. They have no standard of right, no connection to the society from which they spring. It is the philosopher's task to put the three elements back in their proper relation. Lippmann believed natural law shows people how to adjust their lives and dreams to the necessities of circumstance. He thought natural law shows which natural desires must be restrained, which evil can be eliminated, and that it provides the faith to live with that darkness which cannot be destroyed.

## **B. Finding Natural Law**

Lippmann began his career with realism and naturalism in ascendancy. He belittled a priori knowledge and flowery principles. The old politics, he charged, did not succeed because it attempted "to harness mankind to abstract principles -- liberty, justice or

equality -- and to deduce institutions from these high-sounding words."<sup>19</sup> Such politics failed, he explained, because those abstractions are time-bound and empty: "...it is not very illuminating to say, for example, that the principles of righteousness are eternal.... The Golden Rule in a village, and the Golden Rule for a nation of a hundred million are two very different things."<sup>20</sup> Instead of following the old truths, people should find their own, individual truth: "No formula can express ultimate experience....each man in his inward life is a last judgment on all his values."<sup>21</sup>

Rules of conduct, abstractions, laws and social arrangements must be tested continually and empirically, Lippmann urged, then modified to suit changing circumstance. However, once such rules and forms have served their historical function, they should be swept away: "Nowadays you still come across some of these ancient notions, especially in courts, where they do no little damage in perverting justice; but they are ghost-like and disreputable, gibbering and largely helpless."<sup>22</sup> Politics should not attempt to hold humans to abstract standards conceived intuitively or otherwise derived from the air. Standards, instead, should be shaped to fit real human desire. Lippmann advocated a new politics that "proposes to fit creeds and institutions to the wants of men, to satisfy their wants as fully and beneficially as possible."<sup>23</sup> He regarded human desire as potentially beneficial.

By the end of his career, his opinions were dramatically different. He had swung around and embraced the Golden Rule: "Thus the Golden Rule is the moral maxim which establishes itself when men

recognize others as autonomous persons, when they acknowledge the inalienable manhood of other men."<sup>24</sup> He saw human nature as acquisitive, self-interested and domineering; it must be restrained, not fulfilled. Truth, he held, could be objectively known by all rational humans. He no longer denounced abstract principles as a facade for the time-bound truths of previous generations; he found instead certain of these principles to be necessary for the survival of civility. His pragmatic epistemology (as shown in Section III), saw the whole as not really a whole, but as something changing in such a manner that the future cannot be predicted. The mature Lippmann held that certain knowledge of the whole is possible -- that there is an unchangeable and knowable aspect of the universe.

Although these changes were drastic, there was some continuity between the two positions. From the beginning he had argued for standard-bearers of various types: the statesman (who could refine the masses's desires), the expert and scientist (who could refine the view of the environment). Lippmann consistently recognized the need for standards -- it was the nature of the standard that kept changing. This is a general problem throughout his works: He is continually searching for authority, for a point of orientation for the collective compass of humanity. (Lippmann found liberalism only patially able to fill this need.)

In **A Preface to Morals**, Lippmann grew noticeably more concerned about the difficulties of modernity. Realism, he felt, had been overly successful; now the balance had to be swung in the opposite direction. Politics had been exposed as something much less than crystalline fluid coursing through silver forms laid down by the Constitution. The

"acids of modernity" had reduced the human universe to a place without purpose or authoritative belief. Belief had been destroyed, he stated, by forces epochal in scope: science, protestantism, technology, the rapid pace of social and economic change.

Lippmann argued in **A Preface to Morals** for a moralism that is a codified version of the behavior which best fits reality. Moses, for instance, knew the Ten Commandments before they were engraved in stone -- they had been revealed in the experience of his people; they were carried forward in tradition and customary behavior. The theme of Lippmann's moralism was the necessity to adjust to reality. Instead of adjusting human institutions to fit the wants of humans, he suggested adjusting the wants of humans to fit reality. He advocated self-restraint and "disinterestedness," the minimizing of self-interest.

In his distinctive and contradictory style he -- on the one hand -- endorsed the stance of modern science, which he reduced to the statement that the universe is indifferent to the needs of humanity. Yet, on the other hand, he placed science among the acids of modernity; it destroys humans' capacity to believe, it corrodes the purposes of humanity. Moreover, science does not produce a satisfactory ethic to replace that which it undermines. As a sort of compromise solution, Lippmann developed a rational humanism. As laid out in **A Preface to Morals**, it was one of his most eloquent and moving pieces of work. Spinoza is an important point of reference. Jesus stands on the same footing as Buddha, both are mortals who teach people how to live ethically for a reward in the here and now. The Eternal Creator and Judge does not stand over all.

As moving as his argument was, substantial difficulties lay

within it. Lippmann aimed to disprove the teleological interpretation of the universe. He argued, in effect, against classical natural law (which holds that natural beings have predetermined ends and that these ends determine a hierarchically ordered definition of what is right). So insistent was Lippmann upon breaking with hedonism, perfectionism and other doctrines with an asserted end that he tended to vanquish ends altogether. In accepting science's non-teleological interpretation of the non-human world, he embraced a non-teleological view of humanity. But he could not sustain that position. He found it impossible (and undesirable) to adequately account for human ends within the terms of science -- in physico-chemical impulses or conditioned reflexes, for instance. Even within **A Preface to Morals**, the teleological perspective reappeared in places:

...if civilization is to be coherent and confident it must be known in that civilization what its ideals are. There must exist in the form of clearly available ideas an understanding of what the fulfillment of the promise of that civilization might mean, an imaginative conception of the good at which it might, and, if it is to flourish, at which it must aim.<sup>25</sup>

With the passage of time, Lippmann moved to find purposive order and essential regulative principles within human existence. In **The Good Society** Lippmann's standards were no longer presented as a matter of individual choice. They took the form of natural law. Their exact derivation may have been unclear, but their function was apparent. Lippmann's natural law held together a changeable, plural society.

He argued for a modern natural law, one that had been summoned up by the pioneer liberals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to

dissolve the vestiges of feudalism and "make possible the emergence of the new social order."<sup>26</sup> The merchants and manufacturers who gained control of the new state made the law the guarantor of property and contracts, "and they called the guarantee a natural right. Thus, as Roscoe Pound has said, the legal rights of the eighteenth-century Englishmen came down to us as the rights of man."<sup>27</sup> In **A Preface to Morals** Lippmann stated that by the rights of man the industrialists "meant primarily freedom of contract, freedom of trade, freedom of occupation -- those freedoms, that is to say, which made it possible for the new employer to buy and sell, to hire and fire without being accountable to anyone."<sup>28</sup>

Having found that natural law in practice meant the traditional law with all its injustices, Bentham and the radicals of the nineteenth century, continued Lippmann, reacted against the entire tradition. Their attack "brought down the humanist ideal in the crash of the supernatural order; and from it man, who had fancied himself a little less than the angels, emerged as much less than a man."<sup>29</sup> Humans were reduced to "a mere physico-chemical system or a bundle of conditioned reflexes...."<sup>30</sup> With man degraded to "a bundle of conditioned reflexes...all the landmarks of judgment were gone and there remained only an aimless and turbulent moral relativity." "Having conceived man as a being without autonomy, they could not believe he had authentic purposes, inalienable rights or binding obligations...."<sup>31</sup> The doctrine opposed to natural rights led, Lippmann argued, to totalitarianism.

To restore the standard of human inviolability, Lippmann argued, it is necessary to reestablish natural law -- a natural law, it should

be noted, that involves a teleological view of humanity.

As Lippmann was well aware, the forces which he brought together do not rest easily with one another. He held at one spot that human rights were brought into being by the modern economy, and -- as shown in Section I -- he also held that the irresistible progress of the mode of production disrupts "state, law, property, family, church, human conscience, conceptions of right and wrong, of status, of expectation, of need...."<sup>32</sup> As a result there is continuing "rebellion against the world or renunciation of the world."<sup>33</sup>

He first said that ethics, laws and institutions must be adjusted to the mode of production. Then, in **The Public Philosophy**, he contended natural law is normative. The economy, he advised, should be adjusted to his doctrine of natural law. Lippmann was not dissatisfied with this contradiction; he held that it cannot be resolved, that it should not be resolved. In Lippmann's view "man must work out his destiny in the balance, which is never fixed finally between the two."<sup>34</sup> This view, he stated, has always been challenged. There are those who would set their standards entirely by the material realm, "the hedonists who would withdraw wholly into the realm of existence, to eat, to drink, and be merry without the pains and the qualms that go with immortal yearnings." There are also those perfectionists who believe "that by their own revolutionary acts men can make themselves the creators of heaven on this earth."<sup>35</sup> This is the error of the "modern democratic gospel," which promises, "not the good life of this world, but the perfect life of heaven."<sup>36</sup> The root of all these confusions is the failure to recognize that the two realms "are inseparable but disparate...."<sup>37</sup> On the one hand, "the two realms cannot be fused;" on

the other, "they cannot be separated and isolated." They must "be related by striking, maintaining, redressing a balance between them."<sup>38</sup>

### **C. Using Natural Law**

The function of values in Lippmann's conception of natural law is relatively clear. As will be shown, they (a) serve as a standard of appeal in ultimate social and political decision-making, (b) control radical unbelief and deal with the tension between individual autonomy and civil order, and (c) check the force of an unbridled democracy.

#### **(a) a standard of appeal**

Lippmann invoked higher law "against the material powers" of actual rulers as an "immaterial power" which they "can be compelled to respect...."<sup>39</sup> The laws and institutions to which Lippmann's natural law leads have as their goal "the victory of persuasion over force."<sup>40</sup> When people adopt natural law, they agree to "the same criteria and rules of reason for arriving at the truth and for distinguishing good and evil...." When people agree upon how these matters are settled, all issues can be decided within free political institutions.<sup>41</sup>

The specification of natural law is the effort "by which men have sought to exorcise the devil of arbitrariness in human



relations...."<sup>42</sup> The means which they have employed -- "Constitutional restraints and bills of rights, the whole apparatus of responsible government and of an independent judiciary, the conception of due process of law in courts, in legislature, among executives" -- all "depend upon moral commitments which could never possibly be expressly stated in the laws themselves...."<sup>43</sup> Lippmann situated these commitments within his doctrine of natural law; they include

a level of truthfulness in giving testimony, of reasonableness in argument, of trust, confidence, and good faith in transactions...a mood of disinterestedness and justice, far above anything that the letter of the law demands.<sup>44</sup>

Only by adherence to these unwritten higher laws can people "make actual law effective or have criteria by which to reform it."<sup>45</sup>

Lippmann held the specific laws and institutions which abide by his doctrine of natural law could be arrived at through a process based on consensus. Practicality or workability is a crucial criteria to guide the discussion of which specific laws or institutions deserve support. These pragmatic criteria, however, are not enough. Unless higher law is also satisfied, specific laws will not work. For example, when the laws of private property were interpreted "as an absolute right," confrontation was inevitable between "those who owned the earth" and "those who had nothing to lose."<sup>47</sup> An absolute right to property, consecrated in law, meant there was "no connecting bond, no consensus within the same realm of rational discourse" between property holders and the propertyless.<sup>48</sup> The truly enduring basis for property laws is the recognition that "ownership is a grant

made by the laws to achieve not...private purposes but the common social purpose."<sup>49</sup> The rational, natural justification of property is found in the belief that the earth "is the general property of all mankind."<sup>50</sup> Under changing circumstances, the system of private property "must be kept in accord with the grand ends of civil society."<sup>51</sup> Similar principles stand behind other laws, although Lippmann did not exhaustively derive them.

**(b) control radical unbelief, reconcile autonomy and order**

Lippmann's doctrine of natural law provided a foundation for belief and a limit to radical unbelief.

When people lose "the traditional theory of the purpose of life," they are likely to hold that "all facts are equally good and equally bad," that moral values are "ultimately a delusion...."<sup>52</sup> Experience comes to have "no meaning beyond that which each man can find in the intense realization of each passing moment." Experience possesses "no underlying significance, man himself has no station in the universe, and the universe has no plan which is more than a drift of circumstances, illuminated here and there by flashes of self-consciousness."<sup>53</sup>

Lippmann posed a critical question to those who hold such a radical belief: Do they "believe that a man is able 'to experience a reality absolutely independent of himself'?"<sup>54</sup> Lippmann singled out Jean Paul Sartre from among those who answer "no" to this question. The

radical unbelief...is in Sartre's saying that, 'if I have done away with God the Father, someone is needed to invent values...life has no meaning a priori...it is up to you to give it a meaning, and value is nothing but the meaning that you choose.'

With this, Sartre has done away not only with God the Father but with the recognition that beyond our private worlds there is a public world to which we belong.<sup>55</sup>

Lippmann condemned Sartre and those other modern philosophers who have ceased to believe that behind natural law "there is any kind of independent reality that can be known and must be recognized."<sup>56</sup> He condemned them because they deny that there is a "transcendent" law, one that is not "someone's prejudice, someone's wish or rationalization, a psychological experience and no more."<sup>57</sup> Lippmann believed that such a law exists "objectively, not subjectively. It can be discovered. It has to be obeyed."<sup>58</sup>

Thus, the conditions "which must be met if there is to be a good society are there, outside our wishes, where they can be discovered by rational inquiry, and developed and adapted and refined by rational discussion." "If what is good, what is true, is only what the individual 'chooses' to 'invent,' then we are outside the traditions of civility. We are back in the war of all men against all men...."<sup>59</sup>

Lippmann held that society may wish to accommodate those who reject natural law, those who place themselves at odds with its principals. If such dissenters abide by the "sovereign principle" of his doctrine -- that we live in a rational order in which by sincere inquiry and rational debate we can distinguish the true and false, the right and wrong -- then "they may continue to seek the truth."<sup>60</sup>

However, if they would "exploit the ignorance" or "incite the passions" of the people, or if they reject the procedure by which official policy is determined, then they have rejected the sovereign principle of natural law, and have exceeded the limit to dissent. Therefore, they no longer have the right to speak freely.<sup>61</sup>

**(c) check unbridled democracy**

Lippmann found democracy and his doctrine of natural law to be locked in an antagonistic relationship with one another. That is to say, what Lippmann called "pure" democracy -- political equality and majority rule -- is the enemy of his natural law.

Democracy empowers a new monarch, claimed Lippmann, whose person is the masses. Pure democracy "emasculates the sovereignty of the people; for if the supreme lawmaking power is entrusted to the representatives of a transient majority, they can at any time disenfranchise not only the minority but the majority as well...."<sup>62</sup> Pure democracy is "really brute, inchoate democracy, and the certain foundation of absolutism."<sup>63</sup>

Lippmann regarded the furtherance of democracy as a direct attack on his principles of natural law. Conversely, he believed his principles of natural law are capable of containing the democratic thrust.

I am a liberal democrat and have no wish to disenfranchise my fellow citizens. My hope is that both liberty and democracy can be preserved before the one destroys the

other. Whether this can be done is the question of our time.<sup>64</sup>

He claimed that, in historical terms, the principles of natural law precede democracy:

The Bill of Rights (1689) is more than two centuries older than universal suffrage in Great Britain. The enfranchised people did not establish the rule that all powers are under the law, that laws must be made, amended and administered by due process, that a legitimate government must have the consent of the governed.

I dwell upon this point because it throws light upon the fact...that the enfranchised masses have not, surprisingly enough, been those who have most staunchly defended the institutions of freedom.<sup>65</sup>

Lippmann conceived natural law as a restraint and governor on the appetites and passions which the democratic doctrine encourages and empowers.<sup>66</sup> His natural law led people not to democracy but to nomocracy, a society of law, with an officialdom of judges and judgelike legislators and executives. He argued that the temper of all officialdom "must be predominantly judicial: that holds not only for the judges themselves but for the legislators and executives as well, indeed for all who wish to serve the public interest."<sup>67</sup> This is because a judge understands "that he is not there to impose his will but to judge among visible claimants and invisible interests...."<sup>68</sup>

When the legislator ceases to think of himself as an impartial judge among contending interests, he soon adopts an imperial view of his function. He ceases to judge causes among the people: he issues commands to the people, and regards himself no longer as the representative of their true will but as the providential contriver of their destiny. Against this imperial view of the state...the liberal movement has always fought.<sup>69</sup>

Here Lippmann again faced his unresolved tension between the right and the good. It was unresolved because he never decided whether the right is the maximization of the good (as is the case in a teleological view) or whether the right is determined independently

and has priority over the pursuit of the good (as is the case in a non-teleological or deontological view). At this point in Lippmann's argument he swung strongly away from a teleological view. He denied that the "purposes, plans, and management of a social order in the future" are knowable.<sup>70</sup>

Lippmann was stalked by fear of a mass telocracy, the popular democracy whose members hold a common telos. He assumed the worst of such an arrangement, seeing it as pure, unbridled will, a behemoth motivated by the crudest desire -- an absolutism as rank as fascism. To him, it was not a remote danger, a tangent possibility, but a present tendency, an almost preponderant force in modernity.

Lippmann's error was to collapse democracy into telocracy. He saw the masses as inherently concerned with the maximization of the good, he saw them as without an understanding of the right. Lippmann's position, however, is self-serving, for he himself remained unclear in his own views about the right.

#### **D. Growing Negative about Humanity**

When Lippmann was young and held a relatively optimistic view of human nature, he did not espouse a doctrine of natural law. That is regrettable, for if he had, he perhaps would have added something creative and hopeful to natural law thinking. Instead, it was in part his increasingly pessimistic view of human nature which brought him to develop his doctrine of natural law, and it was this view of human nature which assured that his natural law would be conservative and --

one is forced to say -- frightened of the future.

As noted in the introduction to this section, the young Lippmann believed that institutions should be adjusted to human desire. In **A Preface to Morals** he referred to this stance as the outlook of the liberals: "If they thought that man was naturally innocent and good, they have accepted some one of the many variants of liberalism, and concerned themselves not with the reform of desire but with the provision of opportunities for its fulfillment."<sup>72</sup> The young Lippmann insisted that liberal institutions should strive to provide such opportunities.

However, **A Preface to Morals** also recognized a deep-seated tension within such an arrangement. When human nature "is naively trusted, it produces so much disorder and corruption that men once again idealize order and restraint."<sup>73</sup> The inevitable result, he stated, is a reaction against the liberal view and a swing of the pendulum back to the conservative view of human nature:

If they thought their natural impulses were by way of being lecherous, greedy, and cruel, they have accepted some form of classical and Christian doctrine that man must subdue his naive impulses, and by reason, grace, or renunciation, transform his will.<sup>74</sup>

On the balance, the young Lippmann concluded, "No particular view [of human nature] endures."<sup>75</sup>

However, the mature Lippmann regarded human nature much differently. In **A Preface to Morals**, which can be regarded as a transitional book, he referred to "the naive and imperious lust of our infantile natures...."<sup>76</sup> In **The Good Society** he wrote of "the

primitive and persistent impulse to dominate, to submit, to stand in awe of power and to seek its protection;"<sup>77</sup> he also defined the "instinctive" political philosophy: "For every man, until he has been taught differently, is predisposed to believe that what he wills should have the force of law."<sup>78</sup> In **The Public Philosophy** he denounced "the disposition of our first natures, of our natural and uncivilized selves," characterizing these beliefs as the "delusion of men that they are gods...."<sup>79</sup>

Having moved to this negative view of human nature, Lippmann argued that these natural desires "must undergo a transvaluation...."<sup>80</sup> People must cease to desire that which causes evil. **The Good Society** no longer defined liberalism as the view which concerns itself with the fulfillment of human desire: "...the logic of liberalism calls for...the inordinately difficult conquest of man's lower nature by his higher nature."<sup>81</sup> In **The Public Philosophy** Lippmann's doctrine of natural law mandated "the government of our appetites and passions by the reason of a second, civilized and therefore, acquired nature."<sup>82</sup> What the young Lippmann had called liberalism was now strikingly close to what **The Public Philosophy** denounced as the doctrine of "the hard totalitarian Jacobins of the twentieth century...."<sup>83</sup> "Relying upon the inherent rightness of the natural impulses of man's first nature, the Jacobin theory does away with the second civilized nature...."<sup>84</sup> "Instead of ruling the elemental impulses, they stimulated and armed them."<sup>85</sup>

What is it, one must ask Lippmann, that the "elemental impulses" desire? That they seek domination is clear; but Lippmann did not always regard domination to be harmful; in many situations he took



hierarchical organization, one form of dominance, to be natural and beneficial. So the desire to dominate is not to be eliminated but somehow shaped to fit within the form of the existing social organization. What is difficult to understand, though, is how those on the bottom of the hierarchy are to justify eliminating their natural desire to dominate, while those on the top are to justify their desire as natural and beneficial.

There is yet another disturbing vagueness about the sort of objects the elemental impulses desire. Lippmann suggested, when he referred to heaven on earth, that people naturally desire utopia -- immortality amidst peace and super-abundance. But he also gave a much more materialistic and down-to-earth cast to what people naturally desire: "...there are not objects enough in the world to fulfill all human desires."<sup>86</sup> Where, one interjects, would one draw the line between primitive desires and civilized ones? Is a nomadic African, for instance, whose children are dying of starvation guilty of naive desire for wishing there would be water where none has fallen for thirty months? Is it civilized to demand material incentives in the form of tax deductions before one will contribute funds to a well-digging program for the African family? Is it naive to desire not simply remuneration for one's work, but other, intangible forms of reward, such as a sense of accomplishment?

Lippmann's open-ended treatment of the dividing line between naive and civilized desire could be read as an invitation to continually and publicly debate such issues. However, his consistently elitist bias, which emphasized knowledge accessible to only a few, indicated the opposite.

Public discussion of these matters might reveal that there is not an inevitable tension between people's natural desires and the requirements of civilized life. Young Lippmann, it would seem, was on the right track when he argued against the separation of the natural and the higher instincts. Forcing such a division ignites what Santayana called "a war between nature and morality....

As one instinct after another becomes furious or disorganized, cowardly or criminal, under these artificial restrictions, the public and private conscience turns against it [nature] all its forces....nature is rendered vicious and overlaid with pruriency, artifice, and the love of novelty.... Thus the disorder in man's life and disposition, when grown intolerable, leads him to condemn the very elements out of which order might have been constituted, and to mistake his total confusion for his total depravity.<sup>87</sup>

Contrary to the mature Lippmann, repression and self-alienation are not necessities. Civility can rest upon natural desire. It is possible to change the environment to eliminate many causes of alienation. A harmonious order may be possible, or at least an order that believes people naturally desire goods that are not destructive of harmony. John Rawls, for instance, has developed a persuasive argument for what he calls "the Aristotelian Principle": "other things being equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity."<sup>88</sup> Exercise of the Aristotelian Principle is rewarding to both the doer and the observer:

As we witness the exercise of well-trained abilities by others, these displays are enjoyed by us and arouse a desire that we should be able to do the same things ourselves. We want to be like those persons who can exercise the abilities that we find latent in our nature.<sup>89</sup>

Other, more general human needs and potentialities could be specified and elaborated, and natural law deduced from them. Political philosopher Sigmund has suggested social cooperation, equality, freedom and "more difficult of accomplishment, community and love...."<sup>90</sup>

### III. OBJECTIVITY

#### A. Context of Walter Lippmann's Theory of Objectivity

The orthodox view holds that Lippmann's book **Public Opinion** (1922) helped free the main current of Anglo-American political science from the deep, still backwater of the formal-legal paradigm.<sup>1</sup> In a review article on the "science" of the state, Harry Eckstein refers to Lippmann as one of the writers who developed a "sort of counterscience" to the formal-legal synthesis.<sup>2</sup> Eckstein maintains that, as a result of the work of Lippmann and others, political science was rejuvenated by an infusion of novel subjects -- mass parties, interest groups, public opinion and so forth.

Lippmann is among those writers to whom Michael Curtis attributes the "psychological approach to politics." Writing in **The Great Political Theories**, Curtis states that the psychological movement was stimulated "by a disenchantment by some over the preoccupation of traditional political philosophy with formal institutions of government and law and with moralizing about rights, duties and freedoms."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Robert Ezra Park contends that, on its publication, Lippmann's **Public Opinion** was the best text to date "for the social psychological interpretation of politics."<sup>4</sup>

Lippmann had been introduced to social psychology by one of

its founders, the lapsed Fabian socialist Graham Wallas. To Wallas's work, Lippmann brought his own political theory plus a smattering of Freudian psychoanalysis. The result was **Public Opinion**, the book which Lippmann's biographer Ronald Steel says "pushed beyond the sterile doctrines of traditional political science and helped spawn whole schools of inquiry: public opinion polls, academic courses, scholarly journals, even graduate degrees."<sup>5</sup>

This thesis, however, argues that **Public Opinion** contributed less to building up political science and more to tearing it down. Authors such as Lippmann could make a persuasive case against formal-legalism, but they had difficulty erecting a new paradigm to replace it.<sup>6</sup> Overrun by behaviorists and systems theorists, seduced by research programs of varying ilk and stature, political science never attained the alleged rigor of the neoclassical synthesis of economics. Political science remains a would-be science, a discipline in search of a methodology.

Walter Lippmann, despite the implications of the orthodox point of view, never took seriously the pursuit of a method -- for either himself or his discipline. From inception to conclusion, his work was that of a theorist. The mainstream of political science may have found in **Public Opinion** matters of interest to the methodological debate, but Lippmann himself had no methodology (unless classical political philosophy is regarded as a method); in fact, Lippmann did not even remain a firm believer in a generalized scientific method.<sup>7</sup>

No, the orthodox interpretation of **Public Opinion** is not adequate. The book cannot be understood simply within the context of Anglo-American political science. It also must be judged as a piece of political theory. Lippmann was indeed assaulting formal-legalism, and he definitely used social psychology in his attack. However, this onslaught should not be interpreted as a fresh point of departure; instead it should be seen as the continuation of a long-standing battle. This is true both in terms of Lippmann's life and the much longer life of political theory. First, in regard to Lippmann, he used the psychological approach to argue for a position which he had staked out long before he took up the cause of social psychology -- a position which he held long after he lost interest in the psychological approach. Second, in regard to political theory, **Political Opinion** fits snugly within that portion of the liberal tradition concerned with the threat of the subjective, that nemesis which Locke described as "the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man...."<sup>8</sup> From its seminal works onward, liberalism did not champion liberation from all authority; it stood against arbitrary, irrational authority.<sup>9</sup> Those who refined the work of Locke, particularly Adam Smith and David Hume, recognized "the limits of reason and the pervasiveness of irrational forces in man and society."<sup>10</sup> Liberalism did not stand for the unlimited freedom of private judgment; instead, it attempted to delineate the subjective's proper sphere of influence. What began as an attack on capricious and arbitrary rule, as personified by the monarch, thus ended as an attack on any subjectivism that might

stray into politics. Boundaries would have to be set. Liberal constitutionalism, in the words of phenomenologist Henry Kariel,

was designed to exclude from decision-making arenas...the action of people who are impulsive, shiftless, and injudicious, who are not given to making calculations, who fail to see the present in the light of both a validated past and an extrapolated future."<sup>11</sup>

This, then, is the theoretical context within which **Public Opinion** is situated. Lippmann argued that it is impossible for people to know the world as it truly is, because the process of knowing inevitably interferes. Based on this, he argued for a self-consciously "neutral" expertise, one which will "consciously provide a way of overcoming the subjectivism of human opinion...."<sup>12</sup> This fits snugly within the liberal tradition, which typically aims to limit the subjective with "objective" restraints. Section I examined Lippmann's use of the "objective" restraint of the economy, Section II the moral restraint of natural law, and this section examines the restraint of governing elites. Before turning to Lippmann's attack on the irrationality and subjectivity of democracy, it is necessary to review the epistemology of **Public Opinion**.

## **B. Public Opinion and Knowledge**

Although Walter Lippmann was influenced by his Harvard professor William James, it is misleading to consider him a

student of James -- if by that one means a person devoted to the systematic elaboration, clarification or even criticism of a teacher. Lippmann frequently quoted James (particularly in his earlier work) and on several occasions formally acknowledged his debt to his mentor, but Lippmann's work does not consistently uphold the basics of James's pragmatic epistemology.

James held, in simplest terms, that the totality exists but the human intellect cannot grasp it. Lippmann raised no doubts about the first contention, regarding the ontological objectivity of nature. On the second contention, the limits of human rationality, Lippmann held two opposing viewpoints: As was established in Section II, the older Lippmann of **The Public Philosophy** believed that an "independent reality" exists, "objectively, not subjectively. It can be discovered. It has to be obeyed."<sup>13</sup> The younger Lippmann, however, held the opposite point of view. Lippmann's general argument in **Public Opinion** was that humanity's problem in knowing the world is not a practical one, but one of principle: The knowing process always, necessarily determines that one knows a thing in a way that precludes knowing the thing as it is. As Lippmann's mentor James put it, all abstract ideas, scientific theories and interpretations of experience are simply manmade languages. They are ideas, to capsulize James's view, created by the intellect to lead us from an older form of experience to a newer one. It is the nature of the intellect to act as a unifying force. It grasps phenomena as they come into our lives and gives them coherent form. This coherence, however, should not be mistaken for



anything more than a tiny, fleeting patch of manmade unity on an immense and tossing sea of reality.<sup>14</sup>

Lippmann's epistemology in **Public Opinion** ran a similar course: Man lives in a world "too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations." So humans reconstruct the world as "a simpler model."<sup>15</sup> Man creates a counterfeit reality, one based upon "the casual fact, the creative imagination, the will to believe...."<sup>16</sup> Lippmann denounced the claim that human thought and perception naturally take the form of "facts" as a prejudice foisted upon the world by empiricists. There is no such thing as a pure fact, arising neatly in the mind; there is no such event as a direct and truthful connection between reality and human response.

Lippmann, therefore, went beyond a "realist" theory of knowledge. He did not hold that the sensations copy or objectively reflect reality. Reality does not determine thought in a direct, hard-and-fast manner. Instead, according to Lippmann, people create screening mechanisms, "pseudo-environments" that run interference between them and the world. These pseudo-environments or "interior representations of the world, are a determining element in thought, feeling, and action."<sup>17</sup> These "pictures inside people's heads do not automatically correspond with the world outside."<sup>18</sup> When people act on the basis of these pictures, the result eventuates "in the real environment...."<sup>19</sup> Sooner or later contradiction develops between the action based on the pseudo-environment and its effect

in the real environment.

Then comes the sensation of butting one's head against a stone wall, of learning by experience, and witnessing Herbert Spencer's tragedy of the murder of a Beautiful Theory by a Gang of Brutal Facts, the discomfort in short of a maladjustment.<sup>20</sup>

In response, Lippmann argued, man adjusts to eliminate the maladjustment. This adjustment takes place through the medium of fictions.<sup>21</sup> "By fictions I do not mean lies.... The range of fictions extends all the way from complete hallucination to the scientists' perfectly self-conscious use of a schematic model...."<sup>22</sup>

This is a crucial and distinctive element of the young Lippmann's epistemology. He claimed that people have to fictionalize about the environment because it is impossible to know it. People adjust their pseudo-environment in response to the real environment. The motion proceeds from maladjustment to adjustment, through the medium of fiction. This device is similar to the "problematic situation" of pragmatist John Dewey. One knows something when it "fits" or "works" with one's conception of oneself and the world.

Lippmann, therefore, set up an irreconcilable conflict between the subjective and the objective. He framed it, however, in a manner that slights the subjective and overplays the objective. Because he emphasized the necessity of continually adjusting the subjective pseudo-environment, Lippmann underplayed the fact that the environment, too, is ever-changing.

"Existence," in the words of Santayana, "cannot be arrested...."<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Lippmann created a dialectic in which the subjective must always give way to the objective. There is no ideal, in the young Lippmann's view; there was nothing belonging to the inner world that was as significant, perpetual and as constant as the outer world. Lippmann erred grievously here, for it is not the real that endures. As Santayana wrote, "only the transmissible forms of things can endure, to match the transmissible faculties which living beings hand down to one another." It is the ideal which is "essentially eternal and capable of endless embodiments...."<sup>24</sup>

Lippmann emphasized an unchanged reality, a changed picture inside people's heads. In this view, even though there is a nearly endless arrangement of pictures possible inside the head, there is no freedom from reality. The innate nature of man is reduced to a transmission belt.

This line of criticism can be pursued right into the ontological structure of the young Lippmann's world. A pseudo-environment, he wrote, is "a hybrid compounded of 'human nature' and conditions."<sup>25</sup> This definition must be plumbed for all it contains, because -- at this point in his career -- Lippmann almost uniformly defined human nature as an inseparable blend of nature and nurture, inheritance and circumstance. He claimed nothing further about people's needs and potentialities.<sup>26</sup> By implication, however, his definition of the pseudo-environment constitutes a definite claim about the content of human nature. To develop this claim, one should first summarize the manner in

which the pseudo-environment arises: Humans (a) view the world through their senses, (b) create mental images of the world, (c) act, in response to those images, and (d) adjust the images in response to their impression of the consequences of their actions. The key to this process could be called the "cognitive consciousness," a term coined by Ron Perrin. The cognitive consciousness adjusts and readjusts the pseudo-environment in response to conditions or images based on conditions. Lippmann described this faculty as an "innate disposition" whose "central part...retains its specific character and remains common to all individuals and situations in which the instinct is excited."<sup>27</sup> The cognitive consciousness, thus, was described by Lippmann as an innate, unchanging and universal aspect of humanity. This amounted to a potentially egalitarian statement on Lippmann's part: Everyone possesses a cognitive consciousness. Lippmann did not specify, however, whether all cognitive consciousnesses are created equal. As is shown later in this section, he obviously did not believe all people are equal in this capacity, for -- without explanation -- he suggested that some individuals were better able to reduce the discrepancies between the pseudo-environment and the environment. Because of this difference in capacities, Lippmann recommended that "a machinery of knowledge" be built so that those already capable of forming reliable pictures of the environment would have special access to decision-makers.<sup>28</sup>

Beyond the existence of the cognitive consciousness, Lippmann made no further claims about the natural capacities,

needs or ends of human beings. One cannot say anything, he argued, "about what man is and always will be...or about what are the necessary conditions of society."<sup>29</sup> Man may possess instinctual responses, such as fear, "but what he will fear and how he will try to escape, is determined not from birth but by experience."<sup>30</sup> To discuss the ends of individuals, or of society, is to engage in useless pontification, Lippmann concluded.

The implications of this position are quietistic. Lippmann's human, as described above, existed within an externally confined being. Lippmann's ontology predisposed his politics against defining and realizing the good. What began as a relativistic and modern psychological theory was taken to conservative conclusions. Humans react and adjust, but they don't idealize and create a new world. Revealingly, when Lippmann reversed his position on ideals, arguing for objectively knowable natural law, he came to much the same quietistic conclusion: People must adhere to those higher values which can be objectively known, to fail to do so will bring maladjustment and chaos into the world.

### **C. The Irrationality of Democracy**

In Lippmann's view, the threat of the subjective existed not in the authority of the executive but in the growing power of the masses. The march of democracy had, in his eyes, substituted the subjectivism of the multitude for that of the monarch.

Lippmann and others were alarmed, in the words of

Lazarsfeld, because "people who did not belong to the ruling classes from which the government personnel was recruited" were demanding "a voice in public affairs."<sup>31</sup> Lippmann's response to this democratic pressure was unequivocally negative. He declared it a "false ideal" which held that the voters are "inherently competent" to direct public affairs.<sup>32</sup> Using the psychological argument outlined earlier in this section, he concluded that the traditional democratic theory of public opinion is flawed because it is based on "the intolerable and unworkable fiction that each of us must acquire a competent opinion about all public affairs."<sup>33</sup> Only the mythical citizen of a mythical society could conform to the traditional theory, Lippmann argued; in reality, citizens possess not an insatiable appetite for self-government, but myriad desires, some trivial, some grand, some self-centered, some social.

The practical effect of the democratic theory of public opinion had been, Lippmann argued, to expand the influence of the irrational. Democracy created a power in the state, he maintained, that could impose the irrational upon society. In an earlier book, he used the example of William Jennings Bryan's campaign for the Presidency. Bryan, he argued, attempted to use mass democracy to preserve a defunct form of economic organization.<sup>34</sup> The agrarian populists of the nineteenth century, whose preeminent spokesman was Bryan, fought against historical necessity, according to Lippmann. The modern, industrialized economy would inevitably destroy their pastoral order, Lippmann predicted. The populists acted irrationally and arbitrarily when

they tried to stop the restructuring of their way of life, he argued. It was irrational of the farmers to believe their desire to preserve their way of life had more weight with history than the inexorable shift of labor to the industrial and urban centers. Lippmann did not argue that the modern economy is inherently reasonable or necessarily just. In fact, he went out of his way to dramatize the trauma and destruction and injustice that have accompanied the evolution of capitalism. However, as was shown in Section I, he regarded the division of labor and the extension of markets as historical necessities. To try to stop them or to alter their inexorable progress amounts to bashing one's head against the wall -- and that is irrational.

As Lippmann grew older, he stuck by only the conclusion of his argument in Public Opinion: He continued to insist that the democratic method was unworkable, but he no longer argued from a relativistic point of view. In The Public Philosophy, as was made clear in Section II, he based his political argument upon the objective existence of natural law. His description of the shortcomings of the masses, however, had not changed at all. He

maintained: (1) The masses "cannot be counted upon to apprehend regularly and promptly the reality of things."<sup>35</sup> (2) For the masses to understand it, an issue cannot be told in its true complexity and necessary detail; instead it must be simplified and thus grievously distorted. (3) When the masses give their opinions as voters, the most they can say is "yes" or "no."

Whether Lippmann viewed democracy from his youthful, relativistic perspective, or from his mature, absolutist perspective, he saw the same problem: The democratic method distorts and crudely oversimplifies the information available to decisionmakers; because of this, the democratic method is capable of only elementary and childish opinions. "Where mass opinion dominates the government there is a morbid derangement of the true functions of power. The derangement brings about the enfeeblement, verging on paralysis, of the capacity to govern."<sup>36</sup>

In Public Opinion Lippmann proposed to solve this dilemma through the creation of "an independent, expert organization for making the unseen facts intelligible to those who have to make the decisions."<sup>37</sup> In The Public Philosophy Lippmann called for a radically stronger executive: "A mass cannot govern...."<sup>38</sup> It is



the executive which is "the active power in the state...."39 In both situations he suggested the transfer of authority to an elite. The common characteristic of the elite of Public Opinion and the elite of The Public Philosophy was an ability to perceive the necessities of circumstance and a willingness to adjust to them. The elite exercised the same relationship to the masses and their desires as it exercised to its own desires: [The elite was to deny its immediate desires, to seek beyond the immediately seen, to base its decisions upon a larger sense of reality. This capacity, the distinguishing characteristic of Lippmann's elite, was possessed by very few. On why these few possess this characteristic, Lippmann was silent.] The only reasonable explanation -- particularly within the context of Public Opinion -- is that some variable(s) in the environment enabled the elite to better grasp the nature of reality. Lippmann treated this cognitive enrichment of the few (and impoverishment of the many) as a circumstance of nature, similar to the widening of the market and the increasing division of labor. He did not pursue the extent to which the general public's understanding could be improved by altering some aspect of the environment. Instead, he went the other direction. Lippmann institutionalized the existing hierarchical distribution of cognitive ability, of knowledge and of power. He took elitist institutions to be natural, and he built theories which -- if followed -- would make elitism inevitable.

Thus, when examined from the perspective of a popular democrat, Lippmann is vulnerable to a devastating attack.

Lippmann can be denounced for his repeated attempts to frighten the United States away from the substantive fulfillment of political equality. The task of Lippmann's elite was not tutelage of the masses in self-realization; its goal was not to elevate more people to its level of philosophical self-awareness. Its message was self-denial -- the acceptance of one's position. The task of his elite was to stem the onrush of the masses, to push back the democratic urge which had welled up from below. Those "insiders" with superior cognitive abilities are entitled, in Lippmann's view, to help exercise authority in the name of the general interest. They are qualified to be among those who balance the interests of society from above.

What, however, of an arrangement which does not accept hierarchy as necessary. Is it possible? It is true, as Lippmann contended, that a complex, technological society necessarily requires individuals with extremely specialized abilities and knowledge. Nonetheless, individuals do not have to be riveted to particular abilities or skills. The social fixation of an individual according to his or her particular function is not necessary for increased economic productivity, why should it be necessary for political efficacy? The division of tasks can be handled in other ways, such as taking turns. Decision-making authority can be distributed in other ways, by lottery or rotation.<sup>40</sup>

Lippmann asserts that specialization necessarily requires hierarchical authority. That, however, is Lippmann's preference. Those who have certain specialties do not necessarily require or

deserve more power over the non-specialists. In those situations where delegation of authority is necessary, and there admittedly are some, then Lippmann's suggestion that those who exercise authority should be advised by experts has certain merits, as does his later suggestion that those who exercise authority should adhere to society's highest values. By this point, however, one must seriously question Lippmann's justification for these experts and moral stalwarts. His only consistent argument on their behalf is that they check the authority of the masses.

#### D. The Mechanism of Control

How Lippmann's elite was to prove the truth of its knowledge and thus earn its special status was a simple procedure -- in theory. Since the elite's knowledge better fit its time and circumstance than the knowledge of the masses, the elite's decisions "work" better in the given environment.

Lippmann, however, was not disingenuous about how problematic this theory was in practice. He acknowledged, for instance, that consent to the elite or to any authority can be manufactured and based on deception, as well as earned and based on truth. Psychological research and modern media, Lippmann observed, have caused a "revolution" in the practice of democracy: They have made it possible for experts to create or manipulate public opinion. This change Lippmann called "infinitely more significant than any shifting of economic

power."<sup>41</sup> Revealingly, he did not denounce the manufacture of opinion as a dangerous development. "Within the life of the generation now [1922] in control of affairs, persuasion has become a self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government."<sup>42</sup> He regarded this as only one more factor in the equation of modern politics, one more reason why it was no longer possible "to believe in the original dogma of democracy; that the knowledge for the management of human affairs comes up spontaneously from the human heart."<sup>43</sup> Lippmann did not openly encourage the manipulation of public opinion; in fact, he implied that the manufacture of opinion was one of the causes of the decline of democracy. However, neither did he condemn it as a tool.

This leaves unanswered, however, the question of the content of public opinion: Is public opinion merely the aggregate of a multitude of pseudo-environments? How does the public come to agree upon a working definition of reality? Lippmann's answer to this question involved a mechanism he called the "stereotype." Although Steel passed lightly over the subject, it is an explosive concept, probably the most controversial idea in Public Opinion. In startlingly realistic language, Lippmann defined a stereotype as the dominant ideology -- although he never resorted to the term "ideology."

Stereotypes, he said, are the "most pervasive of all influences" on the way one sees the world.<sup>44</sup> They are the preconceptions that, "unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception."<sup>45</sup> Some people's

perceptions are governed entirely by stereotypes. Others "know they are only stereotypes" and "hold them lightly" and "modify them gladly."<sup>46</sup> Stereotypes "may not be a complete picture of the world," but they are a "more or less consistent picture...to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves." "A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral."<sup>47</sup> The "perfect stereotype" is Aristotle's argument that there are humans who are slaves by nature. Aristotle's argument is logically "worthless."<sup>48</sup> It is simply the slave holder's stereotype imposed upon reality.

Each slave holder was to look upon his chattels as natural slaves. When his eye had been trained to see them that way, he was to note as confirmation of their servile character the fact that they performed servile work, that they were competent to do servile work, and that they had the muscles to do servile work.<sup>49</sup>

Aristotle could not see through this stereotype because it "imposes a certain character on the data" of his senses, before the data reaches his intelligence.<sup>50</sup> Other examples of stereotypes include "the American version of progress" which transformed "an unusual amount of pugnacity, acquisitiveness, and lust of power into productive work." This civilization-building ethic "has been a success so nearly perfect in the sequence of ideals, practice, and results, that any challenge to it is called un-American."<sup>51</sup> But the American stereotype of progress was "a very partial and inadequate way of representing the world.

With the stereotype of 'progress' before

their eyes, Americans have in the mass seen little that did not accord with that progress. They saw the expansion of cities, but not the accretion of slums; they cheered the census statistics, but refused to consider overcrowding; they pointed with pride to their growth, but would not see the drift from the land, or the unassimilated immigration. They expanded industry furiously at reckless cost to their natural resources; they built up gigantic corporations without arranging for industrial relations.<sup>52</sup>

Stereotypes, for all their blind spots, are a necessity, for -- among other reasons -- they are "a defense of our position in society," and they tend "to preserve us from all the bewildering effect of trying to see the world steadily and see it whole."<sup>53</sup> Stereotypes can be modified when experience contradicts them. However, if a person "is no longer plastic, or if some powerful interest makes it highly inconvenient to rearrange his stereotypes," the contradiction will be forgotten or otherwise put aside (or perhaps the person will become cynical).<sup>54</sup>

Lippmann's concept of a stereotype is so incisive that it provides a tool to critique his work, as well as the work of others. Lippmann stated that stereotypes are not logical and that reasonable people can see through them and modify them. (One can also assume that there would be times when it would not be in the interest of reasonable people to modify the existing stereotypes.) Although Lippmann implied that the reasonable elite can see things as they are, that would be inconsistent with his general epistemology (putting aside its internal contradictions). So when seeing things reasonably, the elite is actually only seeing things differently -- that is, according to a different

set of stereotypes. Interpreted in this light, the elite's "rationality" evaporates. Lippmann attacked democracy because it elevates the subjectivism of the masses, but then he embraced an oligarchical arrangement which elevates the subjectivism of the elite.<sup>55</sup>

Those who Lippmann described as holding stereotypes lightly and as being capable of modifying stereotypes could be considered the official (and unofficial) ideologists. Lippmann implied that these individuals don't necessarily believe the truth of the new stereotypes they create; it is easy to imagine them as paid purveyors of propaganda.

The transmission mechanism between those who modify stereotypes and the mass of people was not specified by Lippmann. The implication in places, specifically the reference to the all-pervasiveness of stereotypes, was that people either voluntarily or unknowingly consent to stereotypes. The art of persuasion obviously played a role here. The reference to a "powerful interest" that "makes it highly inconvenient" for people to change their stereotypes presents the totalitarian possibility. This powerful interest could easily be seen as one which attempts to control the dissemination of stereotypes, approving some, rejecting others. Lippmann connected stereotypes, through examples, to economic progress and military power. The implication was, again, that the prevailing stereotypes are those that reinforce not simply the position of every member of society but first and foremost the position of the most powerful members.

"The management of affairs," Lippmann wrote during the

1920s, "tends once again to rest in a governing class, a class which is not hereditary, which is without titles, but is none the less obeyed and followed."<sup>56</sup> Lippmann's theory of public opinion explained why he thought this was necessary. His theory of stereotypes and his acceptance of the manufacture of consent show how he thought it could be done.



## CONCLUSION

Life may be full, blessed with love and brilliance and strength, but death is a simple, unceremonial thing. A birth is glorious, an awakening, a cementing of bonds between male and female, between parent and child; a birth gives meaning to the present and reaffirms the existence of the future. The dead give us the past -- tangible in the corpse and its possessions, ethereal in the substance of our memories (sometimes more elusive than we desire, sometimes more pronounced and vigorous than the moment from which they spring, sometimes more satisfying and sensual than the present). All this seems simple enough, well worn by the words of tens of thousands of writers. What is more difficult, less worn perhaps, is the relation between the dead and the future.

When Walter Lippmann was about to die, he asked Louis Auchincloss, who had come to his bedside, if his last will and testament was in order. "Nothing more" was on Lippmann's mind, according to Ronald Steel. "No complaints, no fears, no regrets. Never did he speak of prayer, or of God, or of an afterlife."<sup>1</sup>

There was courage and realism and consistency in Lippmann's request of Auchincloss. Lippmann was concerned with his bequest to the living, not with ruminations about the soul or immortality. Lippmann's last will and testament was, obviously, a statement about the relations between the dead and the future. The possessions of the dead can comfort, divide, placate, wound

or inspire the living. In this respect, Lippmann dealt with the  
con

sequences of his death in a very American way. He set in order  
the property which, according to law, was his to have and  
control.

What, however, of that part of him which was never his to  
own or control? What of the political testament of Walter  
Lippmann? What of the enduring substance of his work? As a  
political philosopher, Lippmann worked with the common property  
of humanity -- its language and ideals. As an humanist, he spent  
his life immersed in the universal aspects of humanity -- its  
emotions and needs, both animal and sublime. All these are --  
even more than private property -- things granted to individuals  
not for private purposes but for the common social purpose. They  
are inherited through books and upbringing and a social form of  
intuition. They are passed on through private lives, through  
public actions and utterances.

The political testament of Walter Lippmann, then, is a  
product of the American tradition of political philosophy. The  
major problems in the political philosophy of Walter Lippmann are  
not the unique difficulties of an individual thinker; they are a  
reflection of deep-seated tensions within the American tradition.  
This thesis identified three major tensions within this  
tradition. First, standards are not set solely by either the  
material or ideal realm. Instead, the two realms are continually  
related and an always changing equilibrium struck between them.  
Second, modernity (which could be summarized as liberalism,  
capitalism and the scientific outlook) is a double-edged sword.

It provides and protects, while it simultaneously corrodes and alienates. Modernity makes a nation wealthy and powerful, but corrupts its citizenry with expediency, opportunism and drift. The modern citizen customarily adopts a non-teleological view of the universe but clings to a muted teleological view of human existence. Third, There is no settled view of human nature, of the needs and desires of humanity. Human nature is at one point regarded as innately opposed to civil order, while at another it is the very foundation of the highest forms of civility. The acquisitive, self-interested and domineering individual is lauded in one setting but condemned in another.

These, in short, are the problems identified by Walter Lippmann. This is the enduring testament he left to the future when he died in 1974. As this thesis made clear, he left these issues far from resolved. For that reason, Lippmann remains important to theorists today. He guides political thinkers to fundamental tensions in American political philosophy. From there, however, work must begin anew, for beyond that point, Lippmann's guidance begins to fail.

As has been shown, Lippmann approached these issues with a foregone preference for the existing order. The mature Lippmann consistently resisted change that was not founded upon current circumstances and their direct needs. He was, by and large, what this thesis has described as a conservative determinist, a theorist who desired the present to be securely bound to the past. Standing against idealists and radicals, he assigned primacy to the past, rather than the future. He preferred

hierarchy and stability to equality and change. Although he invoked the ideal in his defense of order, his guiding light was always close to the ground, a part of the status quo.

Lippmann denied the future and clung too closely to the present. On what the future held, he would not speculate, nor did he dwell on its role in the present: "Never did he speak of prayer, or of God, or of an afterlife." Lippmann may have claimed to see an open future, but he inevitably filled it with the present.

Lippmann's search, in the end, was not for the future, nor was it for meaning or for purpose. Lippmann was looking for authority. The unresolved tensions of American political philosophy were, for him, not simply questions in need of answers but the burning call for an authority that could resolve any disruption caused by those tensions. Lippmann was concerned with how the fundamental questions were answered, of course, but the contradictions in his responses demonstrate that the substance of the answers was largely secondary to him. Paramount to Lippmann was the preservation of authority. Not any authority, but authority vested in the hands of those who are pledged to be gentle with the status quo.

To carry forward Lippmann's work is a worthy endeavor. To do so, one should begin with his questions, not his answers, for his answers cling too closely to the past, whereas his questions harken to the future.

Books by Lippmann are cited in abbreviated form. The full citation is given here.

- PtP A Preface to Politics. New York: Mitchel Kennerley, 1913.
- DM Drift and Mastery. New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914.
- PO Public Opinion. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922.
- PM A Preface to Morals. New York: Macmillan, 1929.
- GS An Inquiry into the Principles of the Good Society. Boston: Little, Brown, 1937.
- MF The Method of Freedom. New York: Macmillian, 1934.
- PP Essays in the Public Philosophy. Boston: Little, Brown, 1955.

## FOOTNOTES

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Ronald Steel, **Walter Lippmann and the American Century**. Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown Books, 1980, p. 324. Steel's book is an eminently readable, entertaining account of Lippmann's life. It is thrilling, particularly if one is thrilled by the interplay of real-life politics, famous personalities and the intellect (broadly defined). It is a reasonably thorough introduction to Lippmann's voluminous works. However, alas, it is very modest in its analysis and disappointing in its lack of sustained criticism of Lippmann's theoretical work.

Criticisms of Steel's book aside, this thesis would never have been started nor completed had it not been for the inspiration of **Walter Lippmann and the American Century**.

<sup>2</sup> Steel, 493.

<sup>3</sup> Steel, 324.

<sup>4</sup> Steel, 490.

<sup>5</sup> Steel, 490.

<sup>6</sup> Clinton Rossiter and James Lare, editors, **The Essential Lippmann**. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982. p. xii.

<sup>7</sup> Steel, 77.

<sup>8</sup> PO, 69.

<sup>9</sup> Steel, 496.

<sup>10</sup> PP, 86.

<sup>11</sup> GS, 342-3.

<sup>12</sup> George Santayana, **The Life of Reason**, Vol. 2. New York: Scribner's, 1954, p. 9.

### Section I

<sup>1</sup> Lewis Mumford, "Mr. Lippmann's Heresy Hunt," **New Republic**, September 29, 1937, quoted in Steel, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, "Liberalism in a Vacuum," **Common Sense**, December 1937, quoted in Steel, p. 325.

3 Steel, 322.

4 Oskar Lange showed Lippmann to be wrong in theory. The Yugoslav state has shown, to an extent, him to be wrong in practice.

To criticize the New Deal as collectivist and totalitarian is doubly confusing when viewed in the light of Lippmann's argument in **The Method of Freedom** (1934). That little book is a popularized version of certain views of Lippmann's friend, John Maynard Keynes. It calls for the government "to raise taxes and reduce its debts in good times and to lower taxes and borrow in bad times, to curtail public works, which means its demand for labor and materials, when private employment is full, and to promote public works when private work is slack." An "ideal" system of taxation," wrote Lippmann, would "be discriminating as to encourage or discourage saving with a view to preserving the equilibrium between saving and investment." (MF, 53-54.)

To some that might sound like, if not economic planning, serious government intervention in the economy. Lippmann, however, tried to present it in a very different light. He described the Keynesian measures as adjustments made, "not to impose a social order conceived by officials," but to maintain the existing but evolving order. (MF, 59) He held in **Method of Freedom**, "Not only is it impossible to control the rhythm of capitalism by regulating laws but the very attempt to do it is as likely as not to accentuate the violence of the maladjustment." The distinction he draws is both one of means (the New Deal is totalitarian because it uses administrative fiat) and of ends (the New Deal is totalitarian because it to adjust the basis of the economy). The correct means, in Lippmann's opinion, is the common law and the judicial system or an administrative procedure that adheres to similar principles; the correct end is to adjust society to the basics of the economy.

The cause of the Depression, Lippmann argued, was the irrational masses; the solution was the rational overseer. "In substance, the state undertakes to counteract the mass errors of the individualist crowd by doing the opposite of what the crowd is doing; it saves when the crowd is spending too much; it borrows when the crowd is saving too much.... Its ideal is to prevent excess." (MF, 59)

5 Steel, p. 323.

6 **The Good Society**, quoted in Steel, p. 322.

7 GS, 205.

8 Steel, p. 323.

9 Steel, p. 323.

10 Steel, p. 326. Steel's explanation of totalitarianism is not

developed. The glimpses of it that pass by, however, remind one of those theorists who believe that the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century were caused and governed not by an elite but by the masses.

11 PM, 226.

12 GS, 234.

13 Steel, p. 323.

14 Steel, p. 323.

15 MF, 49. As will be shown later in this section, Lippmann believed the "increasing complexity of the economic order" is, on the balance, a favorable development. He nowhere tried to sort out the contradiction between this position, which said that the economy naturally produces herdlike behavior, and his Keynesian position, which said the state must intervene to save the economy, which was threatened by the herdlike behavior of the masses. He was, in effect, saving that which he said caused the problem.

16 MF, 23-24.

17 DM, 141.

18 DM, 138.

19 GS, 204.

20 The proposals of guild socialist G.D.H. Cole were quoted extensively and subjected to serious criticism in Chapter 19 of Public Opinion. The Communist Manifesto was the only piece of writing by Marx and Engels to show up in any more than cursory form.

21 PtP, 237.

22 Steel, p. 23. Steel's remark in its entirety indicated that he, too, has a rather narrow interpretation of Marx: "He [Lippmann] read The Communist Manifesto and some of Karl Marx's shorter essays, but disliked the emphasis on class struggle and felt that inciting the masses to



mob action was not a desirable way to bring about a better society. Like most children of the Progressive era, he wanted to make society more equitable, not turn it upside down." (Once again, the imagery of the masses as an easily led herd of children flows so readily from Steel's pen that one senses more than a slight affinity with Lippmann's elitism.)

23 PtP, 239.

24 PtP, 240. That Marx's dialectic was "singleminded" is about the last observation any serious reader would make. The claim is contradicted by both the dialectic's internal working and by the immense range of subject matter to which it was applied by Marx and Engels (not to mention the current growth industry of academics following in their footsteps).

One further note about this quotation: Lippmann's concern for the average person was unusual, not simply because it was rare for him to voice such a thought (the average person is more frequently subsumed within the masses, a threat to stability), but also because it perhaps reveals a personal side of Lippmann's fear of mass society. In acknowledging the pain and aimlessness that is part of life for the forgotten multitudes, Lippmann implied that he would drive himself hard to avoid that despairing existence.

25 PtP, 241.

26 PtP, 242. This was written in 1913, before Lenin and the Bolsheviks had to confront this problem. Some of Marx's thoughts on the proletarian revolution and that which follows it are found in Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, which were not published in full until 1932. Lippmann, at any rate, would neither have read them nor cared what they said. After the October Revolution, Marx stood or fell, as far as Lippmann was concerned, by the successes or failures of the Communist Party, USSR.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, Lippmann wrote: "Lenin completely abandoned the materialistic interpretation of politics. Had he held sincerely to the Marxian formula when he seized power in 1917, he would have said to himself: according to the teachings of Marx, socialism will develop out of a mature capitalism...here am I, in control of a nation that is only entering upon a capitalist development...it follows that for the present all idea of a socialist republic is out of the question...we must advance capitalism in order that the revolution which Marx predicted may take place. But Lenin did nothing of the sort. Instead of waiting for evolution to evolve, he tried by will, force, and education, to defy the

historical process which his philosophy assumed."  
(PO, 119)

Lenin, interestingly, from 1894 to almost the date of the Revolution, did believe that the role of the proletariat was to help the bourgeoisie overthrow the Tsar and establish a democracy. As late as April 1917 the Bolsheviks believed themselves to be in the middle of a bourgeois revolution. At that point, Lenin declared that Russia had passed from the first stage of the revolution, which placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, to the second stage, "which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants." (V. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution," quoted in David McLellan, Marxism After Marx. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1979, pp. 93-94.)

27 PO, 116.

28 PO, 118.

29 PO, 119.

30 Putting aside Lippmann's intentionally truncated reading of Marx's "economic determinism," it must be pointed out that the tide of opinion among western Marxists has moved away from the "hard" determinism of the Second International, a view which did indeed claim that the transformation of the forces of production would transform all social relations. There would be a certain amount of plausibility to the argument that Lippmann responded primarily to this rather mechanistic Marxism.

However, it is clear that Marx and Engels themselves did not argue that noneconomic phenomena are uniquely determined by the economic order. Engels, for instance, tried specifically to guard against this oversimplification of their views: "According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure: political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and then even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories,

religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas, also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events, whose inner connection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible) the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary." (Engels, "Letters on Historical Materialism," in The Marx-Engels Reader, Second Edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978, p. 760.)

Lenin, after his lengthy study of Hegel, strove to refute simple materialism. "Man's consciousness," he said at one point, "not only reflects the objective world but creates it." (Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks, quoted in McLellan, p. 108.)

Gramsci wrote that economic events "simply create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life." (Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, quoted in McLellan, p. 187.)

- 31 PO, 119. Contrary to Lippmann's hyperbolic assertion, Marx never said that economic position supplies a class with "a coherent policy" for obtaining its interests. Instead, Marx introduced several concepts to explain why true class consciousness does not suddenly appear imprinted on the inside of one's forehead. Consciousness always grows in a dialectical relationship with the material. Instead of being a one-sidedly favorable relationship, it also produces obstructions to class consciousness, such as the fetishism of commodities (a concept which shows how capitalist commodity production makes direct social relations between individuals appear to be social relations between things.

Much of 20th century Marxism, most notably the work of Lukacs, Gramsci and the critical theorists, has delved into the difference between the actual consciousness of the proletariat and the consciousness it would have if it were fully aware of its own interests. The praxis of these thinkers and others has concentrated on making individuals within the working class subjectively conscious of their role in history.

- 32 PO, 119. Again, contrary to Lippmann's assertion that Marx posited each member of a class with an identical conception of the class interest, Engels wrote, "For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed." (Engels, "Letters on Historical Materialism," in Tucker, p. 761.)
- 33 PO, 118.
- 34 PO, 118, 117.
- 35 PO, 121.
- 36 PO, 120.
- 37 MF, 6.
- 38 DM, 109.
- 39 PtP, 317.
- 40 MF, 113.
- 41 GS, 117.
- 42 GS, 205. Lippmann, eschewed rigorous definition of key terms and instead simply repeated them until they rang with familiarity.
- 43 GS, 168. Lippmann never claimed that the world market went peacefully into the lives of the underdeveloped nations of the world. He thought that it was usually established by blood and force. Once in place, however, the market brings civilization to the heathens (and eventually the imperialists wither away). Marx, too, thought that the subjugation of lesser developed societies would eliminate their backward aspects, but he also remained critical of the globalization of markets: "In history up to the present it is certainly an empirical fact that separate individuals have, with the broadening of their activity into world-historical activity, become more and more enslaved under a power alien to them...a power which has become more and more enormous and, in the last instance, turns out to be the world market." (Marx, **The German Ideology**, in Tucker, pp. 163-164.)
- 44 GS, 205. Marx, too, held the division of labor to be a crucial category, although unlike Lippmann he saw it developing dialectically. The division of labor, Marx wrote, "implies the fact that intellectual and material activity -- enjoyment and labour, production and consumption -- devolve on different individuals, and that the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in the negation in its turn of the division of labour...."
- "With the division of labour, in which all these

contradictions are implicit...is given simultaneously the distribution, and indeed the unequal distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property....

"Further, the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another.... And finally, the division of labour offers us the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally, divided man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood.... This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now." (Marx, **The German Ideology**, in Tucker, pp. 159-160.)

Marx developed the relationship between property-owner and propertyless as the fundamental antagonism within the capitalist division of labor. Lippmann, in contrast, found no inherent antagonisms within the division of labor. Lippmann also ignored the harmful effects of the "fixation" of individuals to a particular function in the division of labor. This imprisonment of individuals within a certain production niche is, as John McMurtry argues, not necessary for the increased productivity of labor. The technological necessity of the division of tasks (the need "to position labor-power  $x$  in place  $y$  for  $t_1 \dots t_n$ ") can be fulfilled in other ways, "such as taking turns...." The "riveting" of a particular person to one job "for all of  $t_1 \dots t_n$ " is "a function of the economic structure," not of technology, and can be eliminated, once capitalist economic organization is left behind. (John McMurtry, **The Structure of Marx's World-View**. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 69, 80.)

45 GS, 166.

46 GS, 212.

47 GS, 168.

48 GS, 207.

49 GS, 357.

50 GS, 207.

51 GS, 204.

52 GS, 207.

53 MF, 23-24.

54 MF, 90.

55 MF, 105.

56 MF, 95.

57 MF, 96-97.

58 MF, 99-100. Lippmann's argument here completely contradicts Steel's assertion that the mature Lippmann ignored "the central question of economic power." (Steel, p. 324.) Lippmann repeatedly stressed that his attack was aimed at excessive plutocratic "power" and proletarian instability. He stated that "the inordinate accumulation of property means an inordinate accumulation of power," and refers to the plutocracy as "those who have more income than they need for their personal use and enjoyment." Their wealth is used as "an instrument of power exercised generally for the accumulation of more wealth and more power." (MF, 96.)

It was, in fact, Steel who ignored something.-- the depth of Lippmann's commitment to the economic analysis of society.

59 GS, 40.

60 This final argument of Lippmann's closely paralleled the more deterministic Marx. "Men never relinquish the social form in which they have acquired certain productive forces. On the contrary, in order that they not be deprived of the result attained, and forfeit the fruits of civilization, they are obliged from the moment when the form of their commerce no longer corresponds to the productive forces acquired, to change all their traditional social forms." (Marx, "Letter to Annenkov," in McMurtry, p. 206.) McMurtry interpreted Marx to say that "the development of productive forces always holds or advances, and never regresses." (McMurtry, p. 232.)

Marx, of course, at times believed -- in Lippmann's terms -- that the time **had** come when the existing social order could no longer adapt itself to the economy.

61 GS, 205.

62 GS, 209. This change in technology will be realized in one of two fashions: (1) Through a "revolutionary advance in the logical powers of men" which makes possible "a planned society consciously directed." (GS, 34,33.) (2) Through a revolutionary series of inventions which enable men "by their

own self-sufficient effort to achieve a more satisfactory standard of life than they now aspire to." Lippmann suggested two possibilities: (a) "a machine that would with a little muscular energy produce food, clothes, shelter, comforts, and luxuries out of any soil and a little sunshine;" or (b) "a medicine which would make men cease to want the diversified products of modern industry." (GS, 209.)

As impoverished as this view of the future may be, it bears further examination. Lippmann claimed that mankind arose in a "meagre and self-sufficing existence," passed through a stage of increasing interdependence and diminishing necessity (the present), and eventually will enter the future. The possibilities he offered for what lies in wait are totally contradictory. The first possibility is a "consciously directed," hence, interdependent and (it is reasonable to assume) somewhat centralized society that (he implied) is at least as materially productive as the present. The second possibility is a society that lies in the opposite direction. Within it, people live independent, self-sufficient lives, not consciously directed, interdependent or centralized. The standard of living in this society would be superior to that of the present. The sub-possibilities within this arrangement are, again, totally contradictory: The first is that men would be able to satisfy all their desires with a minimum of labor, and, thus, the standard of living improves. The second is that men, with the help of a potion, learn to control their desires, thus, the standard of living falls, but no one notices the difference. These two sub-possibilities are familiar categories within Lippmann's world view. They may be regarded as little more than the good/bad view of human nature, projected onto a technological background. In the first sub-possibility, human nature is regarded as essentially good and hence allowed to fulfill its desires; in the second, it is bad and hence must be restrained. The second view, most assuredly, is that of the mature Lippmann. The bad, irrational side of man must be denied. The question, always, is how and by whom?

63 GS, 168.

64 GS, 209. Lippmann, like John Stuart Mill, held the distribution of income to be unrelated to the mode of production. It could and should be altered. However, Lippmann was not particularly clear about the standard to which it should conform.

65 GS, 232. Since Lippmann absolved the economy from any claim to justice or rationality, the appearance of irrationality or injustice is only a problem in people's minds. However, even though such opinions are false -- since they do not agree with "objective" reality -- they are troubling in Lippmann's view of things. If the wrong opinion is held by enough people, and if those people act upon their opinion (through a democratic government, for example), then that false opinion can change

reality. (Even though reality would eventually destroy itself.)

66 GS, 207.

67 GS, 209.

68 GS, 362-363.

69 GS, 358. It should become increasingly apparent that Lippmann's interpretation of the essential elements of modern capitalism was far from the views held by neoclassical economists. For example, "necessitous bargaining," which Lippmann included among "extrinsic and artificial causes of inequality, would be considered an intrinsic aspect of the economy by the neoclassicals and one which, when incorporated under "voluntary exchange," leads to gains for both parties.

Necessitous bargaining (and indeed much of the division of labor) refers to the advantage wielded by the capitalist over the laborer; for the capitalist may allow the passage of time (and the recurrence of business slumps) to exhaust the worker's resources, forcing the worker to agree to a "necessitous bargain."

Lippmann never endorsed competition, the *sine qua non* of orthodox economics. In his early works he even argued that the competitive ideal is retrogressive. In *The Good Society* he ignored the matter.

70 DM, 143.

71 GS, 230.

72 GS, 227.

73 GS, 174.

## Section II

<sup>1</sup> Alf Ross, quoted in Paul E. Sigmund, *Natural Law in Political Thought*. Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1971, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> PP, 135.

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund, 205-207.

<sup>4</sup> GS, 169-170, 347; PP, 106.

<sup>5</sup> PP, 124.



- 6 PP, 174-175.
- 7 GS, 378.
- 8 GS, 247; PP, 101.
- 9 PP, 179-180.
- 10 GS, 337-338.
- 11 PP, 174-175.
- 12 GS, 347-348.
- 13 Classical natural law principles are established by the natural order of the universe and human society. Modern natural law asserts the inevitability of conflict in the desires and actions of humans and argues the necessity of imposing order by human contrivance. (Sigmund, 80.) David Hume is generally credited with making the most telling distinction between the two views. He stated that natural law principles are "not deriv'd from nature," but arise "artificially, tho' necessarily, from education, and human conventions." (David Hume, **A Treatise of Human Nature**. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946, p. 483.)
- 14 PP, 102, 104.
- 15 GS, 244-245.
- 16 PP, 108-109.
- 17 PP, 160.
- 18 PM, 296.
- 19 PtP, 84.
- 20 DM, 39.
- 21 PtP, 200.
- 22 PtP, 185.
- 23 PtP, 84.
- 24 GS, 377.
- 25 PM, 302.
- 26 GS, 243.
- 27 GS, 243.

- 28 PM, 226.
- 29 GS, 378-379.
- 30 GS, 379.
- 31 GS, 379-380.
- 32 GS, 166.
- 33 GS, 212.
- 34 PP, 153-154.
- 35 PP, 153-154.
- 36 PP, 142.
- 37 PP, 153-154.
- 38 PP, 153-154.
- 39 GS, 334.
- 40 GS, 333.
- 41 PP, 134. Given Lippmann's generally contentious attitude toward positivism -- he typically regarded it as seriously misguided but salvageable -- and given the positivists' misgivings about pragmatism, the notion of methodological common round existing under natural law seems wishful at best. Pushed on the matter, Lippmann would probably state that the necessary consensus would not be that difficult to secure.
- 42 GS, 346.
- 43 GS, 346.
- 44 GS, 346.
- 45 GS, 347.
- 46 PP, 123-124.
- 47 PP, 121.
- 48 PP, 121.
- 49 PP, 120.
- 50 PP, 122.
- 51 PP, 122.

- 52 PM, 99.
- 53 PM, 99.
- 54 PP, 175-176.
- 55 PP, 176.
- 56 PP, 176.
- 57 PP, 174-175.
- 58 PP, 175.
- 59 PP, 176.
- 60 PP, 132-133.
- 61 PP, 126, 132-133.
- 62 GS, 255.
- 63 GS, 255.
- 64 PP, 13.
- 65 PP, 40.
- 66 PP, 162.
- 67 GS, 284.
- 68 GS, 286.
- 69 GS, 287.
- 70 GS, 294.
- 71 GS, 294-295.
- 72 PM, 142.
- 73 PM, 144.
- 74 PM, 142.
- 75 PM, 144.
- 76 PM, 171.
- 77 GS, 342-343.
- 78 GS, 332.

- 79 PP, 86.
- 80 PM, 169.
- 81 GS, 342-343.
- 82 PP, 162.
- 83 PP, 87.
- 84 PP, 77.
- 85 PP, 87.
- 86 PM, 154.
- 87 Santayana, 17-18.
- 88 John Rawls, **A Theory of Justice**. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 426.
- 89 Rawls, p. 428.
- 90 Sigmund, 209-210.

### Section III

- 1 The formal-legal synthesis, which was standard fare well into the twentieth century (and may still be, depending upon the sympathies of one's informants), studies the law (hence, "legal") and formal government organization (hence, "formal"). It places extraordinary influence on constitutional and quasi-constitutional materials and is "less concerned with what people do in government than with the nature of the legal rules that govern their functioning." (Harry Eckstein, "On the 'Science' of the State," **Daedalus**, Vol. 108, No. 4, Fall 1979, pp. 2-3.)
- 2 Eckstein, 9.
- 3 Michael Curtis, **The Great Political Theories: Vol. 2**. New York: Avon Books, 1981, p. 425.
- 4 Robert Ezra Park, **American Journal of Sociology**, quoted on back cover of Walter Lippmann, **Public Opinion**. New York: The Free Press, 1965.
- 5 Steel, 180.
- 6 Instead, several competing paradigms, each controversial in

its own, vie among one another for the consensus necessary if any one of them is to gain dominance. Each competitor holds -- of course -- that it is a scientific approach. Paul Lazarsfeld, for example, claims that "public opinion research has become an empirical science." (Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "Public Opinion and the Classical Tradition," **The Public Opinion Quarterly**, Vol. XXI, No. I, Spring 1957, p. 40.)

- 7 In fact, **The Public Philosophy** called for the renewal of what Lippmann described in places as a divinely inspired natural law. A fraction of this natural law, he claimed, had been distilled in American constitutional materials. His position had seemingly come full circle (on a higher level) to an inspired version of the formal-legalism he had ridiculed forty years earlier.
- 8 John Locke, **An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government**. 1690, Chapter IV, Section 22.
- 9 This general argument is developed by Sheldon S. Wolin, **Politics and Vision**. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960, pp. 346-347, 293-297. Wolin's interpretation, which is slightly different than the argument made here, does not mention Lippmann.
- 10 Wolin, 293.
- 11 Henry Kariel, "Shifting with Art," **Polity**, XII, No. 1, p. 9.
- 12 PO, 249.
- 13 PP, 176, 175.
- 14 William James, **Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking**. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914, passim.
- 15 PO, 11.
- 16 PO, 10.
- 17 PO, 17.
- 18 PO, 19.
- 19 PO, 10.
- 20 PO, 10.
- 21 PO, 10.
- 22 PO, 7.
- 23 Santayana, 30.

- 24 Santayana, 31.
- 25 PO, 16.
- 26 As Lippmann aged, his opinion of human nature grew more negative, as was discussed in Section II.
- 27 PO, 120-121. Lippmann cites here the work of William McDougall, in **Social Psychology**, Introduction, Fourth Edition.
- 28 PO, 230.
- 29 PO, 16.
- 30 PO, 121.
- 31 Lazarsfeld, 41.
- 32 Lippmann, **The Phantom Public**. New York: MacMillan, 1925, p. 20, quoted in Steel, p. 212.
- 33 PO, 19.
- 34 Contrary to Lippmann's assertion, politics brought to bear on the economy does not necessarily produce outmoded forms of economic organization. In fact, the recent collapse of the U.S. steel industry demonstrated how the opposite can be true: U.S. business leaders, basing their decisions on shortterm, "economic" considerations, stalled the upgrading of steel manufacturing technology; meanwhile, political leaders in other countries helped push their steel industries ahead with extensive modernization programs.
- 35 PP, 25.
- 36 PP, 15.
- 37 PO, 19.
- 38 PP, 14.
- 39 PP, 30.
- 40 McMurtry, 69, 80.
- 41 PO, 158.
- 42 PO, 158.
- 43 PO, 158.
- 44 PO, 59.
- 45 PO, 59.

46 PO, 60.

47 PO, 63.

48 PO, 64.

49 PO, 65.

50 PO, 65.

51 PO, 65-66.

52 PO, 72-73.

53 PO, 75.

54 PO, 65-66.

55 It would have been inconsistent for Lippmann to have described the stereotypes of the masses as naturally antagonistic to the dominant stereotype. To do so would imply a class-divided society, something which Lippmann maintained did not exist. However, the thrust of his argument in **Public Opinion** leads one to the conclusion that the opinions of the majority threaten the nation's governability, and that there is some cohesion operating in these opinions -- a force similar, perhaps, to Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

56 Lippmann, "Blazing Publicity," **Vanity Fair**, September 1927, quoted in Steel, pp. 218-219.

## Conclusion

1 Steel, 598-599.