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Nationalism, Ethnocentrism and Personality by H. D. Forbes

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and economists like Amartya Sen and Lester Thurow.

ROBERT E. LANE

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Nationalism, Ethnocentrism and Personality.

By H. D. Forbes. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. Pp. x + 219. \$27.50.)

Since the writing of *The Authoritarian Personality* in 1950, a number of attempts have been made to extend the principal themes of that classic work in a way that advances political philosophy. Forbes's work is another example of such a piece. Though the recognition of the theoretical potential of *The Authoritarian Personality* (AP) is laudable, Forbes unfortunately fails to add much of substance to its theoretical thrust.

The reasons for Forbes's failure are predominantly two-fold. The first is that Forbes is wrestling with a massive collection of dissertation data (collected in 1968) that unfortunately does not tap any significant theoretical vein. The second is Forbes's own confusion concerning the theoretical state of the AP argument, as well as his confusion over why critical theory, his attempted avenue to theoretical advancement, is itself mired within the ideological debate over the role of psychology within political theory.

With regard to the empirical difficulties of the work, Forbes's two hypotheses are:

1. Extreme nationalists are recruited disproportionately from those with the authoritarian structure of personality; and
2. Different nationalists' attitudes are structured, or interrelated, in such a way as to justify using the term "ethnocentrism" to describe the attitudes of extreme nationalists. (p. 3)

His findings, the result of questionnaires administered to French-speaking and English-speaking Canadian high school students, is that there are different kinds of nationalism. Specifically, what Forbes finds is that ethnocentrism is only found to correlate with nationalism in those circumstances in which the outgroup is clearly different from the ingroup. At the least, such a finding is already

implicit within AP; at most, it still does little to advance political philosophy.

The attempt to advance political philosophy beyond the findings of Forbes's study is even more frustrating. Forbes, to his credit, does understand that AP is a clear outgrowth of the Frankfurt school of thought that we know as critical theory. He is aware that works such as AP are the result of a historically rooted admixture of Marx and Freud, and that the writings of Horkheimer, Fromm, Reich, and, of course, Adorno himself all attempted to deal with the psychological or, as it is frequently called, the "early" period of Marx. Yet if Forbes gives such theoretical significance to the critical perspective, one must ask why the almost paltry scope of the two hypotheses of the book is not supplanted by more than an occasional reference to critical theory. Within 193 pages of text, critical theory is abandoned after page 15 until it is resurrected on pages 145-148, and later on pages 189-193 (with the ironic disclaimer that "noone familiar with critical theory would lightheartedly undertake to plumb its depths and report the results in a page").

Even there, the "doctrine (or method) of liberation" that Forbes finds in critical theory is searching for a kind of "objectivity" that in turn is the result of internal contradictions between "objects" and "the claims made on their behalf" (p. 191). The difficulty with such a theory of liberation is that it deals with only the contradiction between reality and objective, between promise and performance. What AP offers, which Forbes seems to have little sense of but which others have dealt with quite precisely (see, Christian Bay, *The Structure of Freedom*, New York; Athenium, 1968) is that *perspectives* upon reality differ widely between the authoritarian and the anti-authoritarian personality. Stated another way, the latter-day questions surrounding AP have dealt with relative subjectivities, not objectivity.

There is now more than adequate evidence that there are significant and testable *distinctions* between psychologies that are highly relevant to differentiation between the political left and the political right. Such distinctions are available not only within the work of political scientists like Bay, but also within the work of cognitive psychologists like Herman Witkin, Joseph Royce, and Howard Gardner.

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To resurrect a classic work requires that one be aware of what has gone on since its demise. To attempt a theoretical advance upon a significant work without an exploration into the difficulties and biases of that work's theoretical framework, particularly within an area so ideological in its origins and implications as the authoritarian literature is, assures that the current work will be but a small contribution.

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Georges Sorel: The Character and Development of His Thought. By J. R. Jennings. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. Pp. xi + 209. \$25.00.)

J. R. Jennings's study manages the difficult task of combing intellectual biography and the analysis of ideas. It is especially good at making sense of the transitions that are notoriously a feature of Sorel's thinking. The book is compact and clear, the proportions of its discussion judicious, and its scholarship faultless. It is one of rather few works on Sorel that one could recommend to students without fear of their being confused or misled: At the same time, it is a sophisticated work (but unpretentiously so) that one ought carefully to consult in doing research on any of the diverse topics it discusses. It is one of several recent pieces of evidence that Sorel scholarship is at last being given the imaginative treatment it deserves.

One French commentator (quoted by Jennings) has said that Sorel's writing "excluded order, clarity, and, in general, all that would make the assimilation of his ideas easier." Jennings himself elaborates on the difficulty of reading Sorel's work, referring to its sheer extent and diversity, its frequent abstruseness, its heterogeneity of level, and the volatility of the hopes (and the despair) that impelled it. He adds that "pluralism" precluded Sorel from offering any unified or systematic exposition of his thinking (pp. 176-77). Pluralism is not inherently unsystematic. If Sorel had held that a single set of philosophical principles dictated identical conclusions in diverse fields—Jennings speaks of "methodological, scientific, epistemological and ethical pluralism" (pp. 12, 15)—then he would have been a systematizer indeed. However, Jennings does not take

Sorel's pluralism to be anything so elaborate or developed. It is something more like a disposition than a theory, and must be defined in a way supple enough to embrace several potentially separable things: conflicts between disciplines, conceptual diversity within disciplines, differences between types of explanation, incommensurability, as well as a sheer stubborn sense of the complexity of life and a hatred of the naive.

What is called pluralism here might possibly invite, the alternative label of *dualism*. Dualism may of course be merely an impoverished pluralism (or a monism *manqué*) but it need not be, and there seems to be a difference between positing an indefinite number of possible points of view and insisting on exhaustive choices. Very often, Sorel does the latter. He speaks of the artificial and the natural, the inside and the outside, the abstract and the concrete, the psychological and the scientific, and so on. Even his pluralistic doctrine of communities (*cités*) of enquirers tends, effectively, to collapse, into a "polar" opposition of science and religion (p. 11). It would be enormously interesting to examine the relation between Sorel's disposition to pluralize, or to open questions to an indefinite number of answers, and his disposition to dualize, or to insist that answers of only two kinds can count. It is among the many merits of Jennings's book that it poses such constructive and far-reaching questions.

RICHARD VERNON

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The Ivory Tower: Essays in Philosophy and Public Policy. By Anthony Kenny. (New York and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985. Pp. 137. \$29.95, cloth.)

Kenny's collection of philosophical essays is intended to show that the concepts of intention, voluntariness, and purpose play a crucial role in legal and political issues of broad and general interest. The nine essays in this volume fall into two categories: philosophy and law, and philosophy and war. An epilogue consists of one essay on academic freedom.

Part 1, on the philosophy of law, contains four papers. The first two, "Direct and Oblique Intention and Malice Aforethought"