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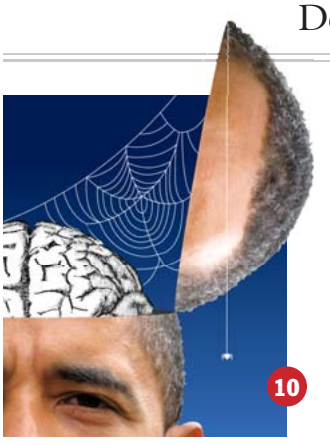

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COVER BY GARY LOCKE

The Blindness of Bill Gates

Americans have a few national quirks, the patriotic Scrapbook is willing to concede, and one of them is the assumption that people who have made great piles of money in life—Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, H. Ross Perot, Steve Jobs, Warren Buffett—have something worthwhile to say on other subjects. The latest example of this common misapprehension comes from the lips of billionaire industrialist Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft.

In a recent interview with the *Financial Times*, Mr. Gates expressed an interesting philosophy of philanthropy:

> Quoting from an argument advanced by moral philosopher Peter Singer, for instance, he questions why anyone would donate money to build a new wing for a museum rather than spending it on preventing illnesses that can lead to blindness. "The moral equivalent is, we're going to take one percent of the people who visit this [museum] and blind them," he says.

In truth, of course, The Scrapbook questions why anyone would take moral guidance from "moral philosopher" Peter Singer, a well-known proponent of mass euthanasia. But we digress. If we read him correctly, Bill Gates seems to believe that there is some direct moral correlation between the human condition—including the fact that people suffer in the world—and the expression of human genius. Or put another way: Every penny spent to erect a cathedral, or compose a symphony, or "build a new wing for a museum," is one less penny for people who suffer from "illnesses that can lead to blindness."

Bill Gates, of course, is entitled to his opinion, although The Scrapbook wouldn't wish to live in some utopia without museums, archives, libraries, concert halls, equestrian statues, or ecclesiastical structures. Nor do we accept his notion of moral equivalence. Indeed, there may be people—well, one, anyway—whose hearts are gladdened not by the Taj Mahal, or a Hopper painting, or Chopin nocturne, but the sight of Microsoft Corporation headquarters in Redmond, Washington.

Yet it seems evident, to The Scrapbook at least, that if resources were withheld from symbols of human achievement (distinguished buildings, great museums, well-stocked libraries) unless and until the traditional human scourges (poverty, disease, tyranny) were eradicated, we would inhabit a sterile, oppressive, dystopian world.

A world, by the way, very much unlike the comfortable principality that Bill Gates's billions have bought him, Mrs. Gates, and their three children: a house worth well in excess of $125 million, with a thousand-square-foot dining room, a 60-foot swimming pool with underwater music system, and a private library featuring its own curator, the Codex Leicester—and most recently, the acquisition of a volume of Leonardo da Vinci manuscripts (price: $30.8 million). The Scrapbook cannot imagine how many people went blind to buy that one. ♦

The FDA vs. Information

It's difficult to think of a company doing anything as gee-whiz neat as 23andMe. The Mountain View, Calif., firm, which opened its doors to the public in 2007, provides comprehensive genetic tests to anybody with $99 to spend. Customers send in a saliva sample and about six weeks later get access to a detailed website explaining their unique genetic code along with an opportunity to connect with (usually distant) relatives who have also done business with 23andMe. For those who use it, the results are endlessly fascinating; for scientists, the company's trove of genetic data is hugely valuable. And that's why it's outrageous that the Food and Drug Administration has ordered 23andMe to stop selling its kits.

The FDA's letter demanding the company to stop doing business is a model of bureaucratic overreach. It claims that the 23andMe test tube kit is a "medical device," because it provides information about the "diagnosis of disease" but isn't proven to be as accurate as the bureaucratic mandarins wish it were. As an example, the FDA speculates that false positive markers for breast cancer could lead women to "undergo prophylactic surgery, chemoprevention, intensive screening."

This sounds pretty scary. Until one realizes that no doctor wanting to keep his or her license would ever perform any of these procedures without a battery of other tests and evaluations. Or that genetic sequences in apparently healthy adults are almost never—in themselves—the cause of disease but, rather, simply indicate risk of disease. Or, for that matter, that 23andMe's genetic testing, whatever its imperfections, provides vastly better medical advice than a huge number of self-help books and websites that the FDA (thankfully) has no ability to regulate.

In the end, 23andMe provides nothing more than information—useful, fascinating, potentially lifesaving information. Banning the company's products and services won't save a single life, but it does reflect an overbearing, paternalistic mindset on the part of the FDA's

staff. There are certain things, even about individuals' own genetic codes, that the FDA just doesn't think Americans should have the opportunity to find out. ♦

Keeping Up with Joe

What would Miss Manners say about Russian president Vladimir Putin? No, not about his habit of going shirtless in public. It seems that Putin has developed the habit of showing up late for important meetings, and keeping foreign dignitaries waiting. On a recent visit to South Korea, where proper etiquette is of paramount importance, the Russian leader was a half-hour late for a meeting with President Park Geun-hye. (To be fair, he may just have been stuck in Seoul's abominable traffic.) That came on the heels of a major snub of our own secretary of state John Kerry; after Kerry had traveled all the way to Moscow to discuss the Syrian crisis with Putin this spring, the Russian president kept Kerry waiting for three hours in the Kremlin. And just last week, Putin was 50 minutes late for an audience with the pope in Rome.

The Scrapbook isn't one to make overheated comparisons, but this calls to mind no one so much as Stalin, who also displayed his contempt for others by keeping them waiting. Of course, Putin is a mere piker compared with Old Joe: In 1949-50, Mao Zedong, freshly victorious in the Chinese civil war, traveled to Moscow to meet the Soviet dictator. There, Stalin kept Mao waiting for two months between meetings. Perhaps that's something that Putin can aspire to. ♦

We Can Dream, Can't We?

A new study from the Cato Institute asks the question many travelers have pondered after a pat-down gone awry: Can't we replace the TSA? The agency's embarrassing record of waste and mismanagement makes a compelling case.

In more than one instance, the agency has wasted tens of millions on technology that ended up being a flop. It bought hundreds of explosive-detector machines that turned out not to work outside the lab.

A few years ago, defying public outcry, it installed full-body scanners that produce graphic images of passengers' bodies. According to Cato, the agency never bothered to do any kind of cost-benefit analysis. Since then, independent scholars have done such analyses, and found that the costs far outweigh the gains. The Government Accountability Office called it "unclear" whether the machines can detect the hidden bombs they are supposed to thwart.

Congress created the Transportation Security Administration in the panicked wake of 9/11. Since then, its former chief has called it "hopelessly bureaucratic," and despite a budget of nearly $8 billion, a report from the House Homeland Security Committee's transportation security subcommittee blasted the agency for "failing to meet taxpayers' expectations."

The Cato report, "Privatizing the Transportation Security Administration," also details some of TSA's internal troubles: management caught reimbursing extravagant

expenses, dozens of employees fired at a time for failing to adhere to procedure, hundreds fired for theft.

A few U.S. airports are not under the TSA's watchful eye. There are 16 airports that have opted out and use private screening, although still regulated by the federal government. The DHS inspector general and a TSA consulting firm determined that the private screeners had about the same rate of competency as, or slightly better than, the TSA.

The majority of European and Canadian airports employ private screening companies. Cato comments, "In many ways, the United States has become a laggard in commercial aviation." Privatizing security could allow screening companies to compete and eliminate waste. Airports could customize their security based on traffic flow and other factors that might be unique to their location. The federal government could focus on intelligence and analysis.

In 2005, the DHS inspector general concluded, "The ability of TSA screeners to stop prohibited items from being carried through the sterile areas of the airports fared no better than the performance of screeners prior to September 11, 2001." Airport screening has unquestionably become more of a hassle under the TSA, by several degrees of magnitude. But according to these reports, we're not any safer. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'If today's extremist rhetoric sounds familiar, that's because it is eerily, poignantly similar to the vitriol aimed squarely at John F. Kennedy during his presidency. And just like today, Texans were leading what some of them saw as a moral crusade. To find the very roots of the paranoid right of 2013, just go back to downtown Dallas in 1963, back to the months before the Kennedy assassination. It was where and when a deeply angry . . ." (Bill Minutaglio, *Washington Post*, November 21). ♦

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A Man's Word

I am no Miniver Cheevy, pining for days gone by. Not usually. But having just signed piles of paper before a gaggle of lawyers to get a relatively simple transaction done, I am thinking of Wally, if that was his real name.

Wally was a New York City entrepreneur who brought competition to off-track betting and markets to the distribution of theater tickets. In short, he was a bookmaker and ticket scalper. Wally always wanted to own a restaurant, partly to have something he could claim as a "visible means of support," partly because the legend of Jilly's, Frank Sinatra's hangout, Toots Shor's Restaurant, and other night joints drove him on. So eventually he opened one, in the heart of the theater district.

No sauces or anything fancy: huge steaks served on sizzling platters, five-pound lobsters, martinis, and anything else that you might want before or after a Knicks game or Broadway musical. And a proprietor who would sit down and chat for as long as it suited you, even if your date wasn't interested in the line on the weekend's football matchups.

At the beginning things went poorly with the restaurant, and Wally was one step ahead of his creditors—not those to whom he might owe something in his main lines of business, since nonpayment there could be health-threatening, but food and linen suppliers and the like.

I had been using Wally's to entertain clients, feed my son and his pals before basketball games, even play host to some of my more effete friends who were visiting New York. For them, the Wally's scene was as exotic as the scene at their Knick—the Waspy, private Knickerbocker Club—would have been for me and, I suspect, for Clyde Frazier, Patrick Ewing, and the rest of New York's real Knicks. When Wally told me he might have to close, I asked how much I had spent there every month and offered to pay him a year's worth of dinners in advance in order to help him out and keep me in steaks. He accepted. No witnesses. No papers. Just a deal between an academic economist and a man who everyone in town knew kept his word.

JORI BOLTON

The good news is the restaurant took off and became The Place to Be for a certain sort of high-rolling New Yorker.

Flash forward a few years. I am on the West Coast on business and am taken ill. I call my then fiancée, now wife, Cita in New York and ask her to come help me get home where there are doctors with Park Avenue offices proving their competence. But, being frugal, she has neither cash for a ticket nor credit cards.

I tell her to go to Wally's, ask for him, explain the problem. She does. He whips out a roll of bills and puts it in her hand. She starts to commit the unpardonable sin only a bona fide member of the Junior League would think of: She begins to count the money. Wally stops her. He knows how much is there, will tell me when I get back, and knows I will take his word. No witnesses, no lawyers, nothing to sign.

The lady flies out to the left coast and helps me get back to New York, where doctors pronounce the ailment a one-off with scary symptoms but little consequence. So to Wally's for a celebratory dinner and repayment in cash, then some show or other for which Wally has obtained tickets by introducing an innovation later to be adopted by the airlines: He has stood in front of the theater and offered a $200 per ticket premium plus free tickets for the following night. He's chosen the best seats from the many offered, ignoring the fact that New York's attorney general was cracking down on scalpers that month. Bureaucrats do try to snuff out markets wherever they rear their democratizing heads. But the AG was a longtime Wally's client.

I have never figured out whether the difference between the 21st century and the 1960s, '70s, and '80s is the difference between Washington and New York or the difference between now and then. I like to think it is different cities, different ways of doing business. But deep down, I suspect that the times have changed—and, in this regard, not for the better.

Irwin M. Stelzer

the weekly Standard

‘Folly, Fatuity, and Futility’

The interim agreement that the United States and its partners cut with Iran last week stands as a centerpiece of President Barack Obama’s foreign policy. The Obama administration has walked away from a core objective of U.S. policy for two decades—preventing a nuclear Iran—thereby threatening fundamental regional and global interests. In accepting a partial pause in aspects of Iran’s nuclear program in return for sanctions relief, and in giving up on the insistence that Iran ultimately abandon its nuclear program, the Obama administration invites dire strategic consequences—an existential threat to Israel and our Arab allies, nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, a strengthening of the forces of radicalism and terrorism in the region, and a fundamental weakening of the U.S. position in the region and the world.

Congress and U.S. allies in the Middle East must make their own judgments of this deal and retain freedom of action. They may well be able to limit its damage. We encourage them to do so. But we’re also obliged to ask what the deal tells us about our president and his view of the world.

Attlee, Obama, and Chamberlain

CHAMBERLAIN: NEWSCOM

There’s an obvious comparison of Barack Obama to Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister who pursued a policy of appeasing Adolf Hitler, culminating in the Munich conference of 1938. There, Chamberlain and the French premier agreed to Hitler’s demand that Czechoslovakia should cede the Sudetenland to Nazi Germany to stave off a threatened German invasion, without the Czechs even being a party to the talks.

Obama does manifest some of Chamberlain’s trusting naïveté and insular self-righteousness. More important perhaps, like Chamberlain, Obama thinks his job is to accommodate domestic war-weariness and to keep us out of foreign conflicts. Also like Chamberlain, Obama in the Middle East has inclined toward appeasing Muslims at the expense of Jews in the Holy Land. And like Chamberlain, Obama will go down in history as a failed leader of the leading Western democracy, one whose policies will have to be reversed—one hopes this time at less cost—by his successor.

Churchill succeeded Chamberlain in May 1940, and saved the West. Churchill in turn was succeeded in July 1945, two months after V-E Day, by Clement Attlee, the Labour party leader, who defeated Churchill in the general election. And it is Attlee with whom Obama has perhaps more in common even than Chamberlain.

Attlee cared far more about the massive expansion of the British welfare state than about preserving Britain’s traditional role in the world. Or rather, he didn’t want to preserve that role. He described it as the “mess of centuries,” and it was a mess he wanted to clean up. And so Attlee went about tearing apart the strategic and imperial inheritance that Churchill bequeathed him in 1945. Attlee believed that a new era had dawned, one where the rules derived from a study of history and its lessons no longer applied. The old power politics were anachronistic. British bases in the Mediterranean and East Indies were “obsolete.” The United Nations would be the key to the future. And the British economy was weak. So Attlee moved quickly to decolonize a significant part of the British Empire, granting independence to India, Burma, and Ceylon, and reducing or removing British presence in Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Greece, and Southeast Asia. Some of this was desirable, if not inevitable, but the precipitous and pell-mell fashion in which this policy was executed often sparked chaos and bloodshed in the countries abandoned, and undermined British strategic interests around the world.

Yet Attlee oddly decided to make a stand in Palestine, the one part of the empire from which Churchill thought it right to withdraw and where a Jewish state was ready to be established. As the Attlee government became increasingly hostile to Zionism, an astonished Churchill commented on Attlee’s inversion, if not perversion, of foreign policy priorities: “To abandon India, with all the dire consequences that would follow therefrom, but to have a war with the Jews in order to give Palestine to the Arabs amid the execration of the world, appears to carry incongruity of thought and policy to levels which have rarely been attained in human history.” Or, as Churchill further put it, “‘Scuttle’ everywhere is the order of the day—Egypt, India, Burma. One thing at all costs we must preserve: the right to get ourselves world-mocked and world-hated over Palestine.”

Still, despite the Attlee government’s efforts, a Jewish state was successfully established. And however bungled Britain’s relinquishment of its empire, the United States was there to take up Britain’s burden in Turkey and Greece and to take over the dominant global role Britain had held for two centuries. The damage inflicted by Attlee’s policies

was limited because the United States, led by Harry Truman, stood ready to take over. As the commentator Mark Steyn has often pointed out, though, there is no one standing behind the United States now. So the consequences of Attlee-ism in America today will be far more dire than those in Britain in 1945.

President Obama seems intent on relinquishing America's position in the Middle East and the world, achieved with so much exertion over many decades. He sees America as an unexceptional nation whose international involvements have often been wrong and ineffective. Like Attlee, he believes we now live in a new era in which the old rules are anachronistic. As he said at the U.N. in 2009, "In an era when our destiny is shared, power is no longer a zero-sum game. No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation. No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed. No balance of power among nations will hold."

So Obama is engaged in Attlee's project 70 years later, ignorant of the lessons of those decades and of the far greater risk of following that path with no friendly rising power standing by to pick up the reins. One can say of Obama's Middle East policy what Churchill said in 1949 about the Palestine policy of Ernest Bevin, Attlee's foreign minister: He is "wrong, wrong in his facts, wrong in his mood, wrong in the method, and wrong in the result," and "no one has been proved by events to be more consistently wrong on every turning-point and at every moment than he." One can say of Obama's policy what Churchill said of Bevin's: It is a "policy of folly, fatuity, and futility the like of which it is not easy to find in modern experience."

But our task is not merely to characterize the foreign policy of Barack Obama, that heir of Attlee with more than a touch of Chamberlain. Our task is to oppose it and reverse it. There were, after all, limits to what Churchill could have achieved after the war. The empire was probably doomed, and Britain itself was unable to sustain a great power role. America, on the other hand, is still a superpower. The American people need not acquiesce in Obama's foreign policy of folly, fatuity, and futility.

—William Kristol & Michael Makovsky

Bullies in Beijing

While Washington and the world have been focused on the nuclear agreement reached with Iran last week in Geneva, on the other side of the globe, one of the parties to that deal, China, was at the very same time making the peaceful resolution of its dispute with Japan over a group of small islands in the East China Sea even less likely.

Out of the blue, the Chinese government announced it was creating an "air-defense identification zone" covering a huge swath of the East China Sea, including the airspace over Japan's Senkaku Islands—the small set of islands that China and Taiwan refer to as Diaoyu. The Chinese defense ministry said it was taking this step "with the aim of safeguarding state sovereignty, territorial land and air security, and maintaining flight order."

Regular international commercial flights will not be affected, but other aircraft—presumably Japanese and American military aircraft—not "properly identifying themselves" will, the ministry blandly asserted, become targets of "defensive emergency measures." So as to leave no uncertainty about Beijing's seriousness in asserting control, within hours of the announcement, the Chinese Air Force carried out its first patrol in the zone, with reconnaissance planes, early warning aircraft, and jet fighters in support.

Coming on top of routine incursions of Chinese maritime and air assets into the waters and airspace surrounding the Senkakus over the past year, and the corresponding response by Japanese Coast Guard and military aircraft, Beijing's newest step can only escalate tensions and increase the chances of a dangerous military confrontation.

The seed for the current confrontation was planted some 40 years ago during the Nixon presidency and under the guiding hand of national security adviser Henry Kissinger. Previously, the official U.S. government position was that, while under the terms of the peace treaty with Japan the United States would administer the Okinawa and Ryukyu Island chains, including the Senkaku islets, "residual sovereignty" resided with Japan. President Kennedy, in an executive order regarding the administration of the islands, had stated that the Ryukyus were "to be part of the Japanese homeland."

But with the opening to China underway, the Nixon administration put in place a more "nuanced" position, declaring U.S. "neutrality" with respect to the various competing claims of sovereignty over the Senkakus by China, Taiwan, and Japan.

Although the dispute over the sovereignty of the eight islets is decades old now, Beijing's more aggressive posture has gone hand-in-hand with the growth in China's military and maritime capabilities. And Chinese ambitions have been aided and abetted by a general failure of successive American administrations to respond effectively to the shifting balance of power in Asia—a problem compounded by the Obama White House's seeming indifference to ensuring its own plans for rebalancing in the region are not undone by the massive cuts to defense imposed by the Budget Control Act.

For its part, Japan, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, has set out an ambitious agenda to help address the changing security landscape. Plans include issuance of a national security strategy, the drafting of new guidelines governing U.S.-Japan military cooperation and operations, creation of a national security council to better coordinate security decision-making, and a new interpretation of Japan's constitution to allow Japanese "self-defense" forces to engage for the first time in "collective defense" efforts with allies like the United States and Australia. And, in contrast with most of America's allies, Tokyo will be adding to its defense budget, not cutting.

At least rhetorically, the administration has been supportive of this agenda, with the most recent affirmation coming at the conclusion in early October of the "two-plus-two" meeting in Tokyo of the U.S. secretaries of state and defense and Japan's ministers of foreign affairs and defense.

Nevertheless, the worry in Japan, as suggested by various officials on a recent trip there, was whether Washington would be fully on board as each of these measures was being rolled out. As one Japanese analyst dryly noted, Washington is wont to say: "Well, relations are good with China now, so let's not upset them with something they will find provocative," or, "Relations with China right now are somewhat rocky, can we hold off until things improve?"

It doesn't help that little over one month after affirming at the "two-plus-two" meeting that the U.S.-Japanese "alliance is the cornerstone of peace and security in the region," national security adviser Susan Rice declared, in a major policy address at Georgetown University, that, with China, the United States will "seek to operationalize a new model of major power relations." The phrasing was first put forward by China's new leader, Xi Jinping, and Beijing reads it as Washington conceding China's great-power status and prerogatives in shaping the Asian order.

In this context, although the Senkakus are relatively insignificant in size, the question of their control isn't. The Senkakus sit astride a key strategic maritime node and are an important pathway for the Chinese Navy to escape the so-called first island chain and out into the broad Pacific. Hence, as a matter of deterrence and maintaining American naval preeminence in Asia, keeping the Senkaku Islands firmly in Japanese hands and, most immediately, continuing to exercise the American and Japanese militaries' right to fly freely over the island group is critical.

If Susan Rice truly wants a new model of great-power relations with China, the first step the Obama administration should take is to make sure Beijing's use of the old model of great-power bullying isn't in any way tolerated or rewarded.

—Gary Schmitt

The Fourth Branch of Government, Part I

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

To restore economic growth, create jobs, and lift the veil of uncertainty hanging over every business and investor, we must curb an unprecedented onslaught of regulations and reform the regulatory system itself.

American businesses and consumers are being buried under an avalanche of rules from a system that is increasingly opaque and unaccountable. Since 1976, we've added 176,000 regulations to the books. Federal agencies are churning out another 4,000 every year. And the number of "major" regulations—those with a $100 million impact or greater—has gone up 80% in ten years, from 124 in 2003 to 224 last year. The size, scope, cost, and complexity of regulations are reaching immense proportions.

Take Obamacare, for example—a convoluted, sprawling piece of legislation that has spawned a flood of regulations. As of September, the administration had already published 109 final rules governing the implementation of the law. Together, these regulations total more than 10,000 pages, which is eight times longer than the Bible.

The price tag for all of the regulations already on the books—and not including the huge rules on the drawing board or in the pipeline—amount to $1.8 trillion, or roughly equal to the entire GDP of Canada. That's $15,000 a year per household, making it the second largest item in the typical family budget.

Then there's the cost in personal and economic freedom. Today we have regulations to decide exactly what kind of health coverage you must have … what kind of mortgage you can get … even what kind of light bulb you must use. And if a court hadn't intervened, there would be regulations telling you what size soda you can drink in New York City!

We're not only concerned with the number of rules, and the costs they create, but the process by which they are made. Stakeholders and average citizens are being shut out. Secret deals are being cut behind closed doors. Data is being cherry-picked. Congress is ceding too much authority to the agencies, who abuse that freedom by twisting congressional intent to serve their own ideological agendas.

As school children, we were taught about the three branches of government—legislative, executive, and judicial. But now we have a fourth branch, and you won't find it in the Constitution: a regulatory branch that is potentially more powerful than the other three combined.

We're not arguing that we should abolish all regulations or dismantle the rulemaking process. But, too many needless and expensive regulations are clearly costing jobs and growth. How we can reform the system that produces them will be the topic of next week's column.

Obama's Stubbornness

A mind is a terrible thing to change.

BY FRED BARNES

"There are some things I really believe in," President Obama said last week. He was putting it mildly. Actually there are some things he really, really, really believes in—whether they work or not. Either way, he's sticking with them. And Obama is one stubborn dude.

This wouldn't be a problem if only a few of his lesser policies were at stake. But it's his economic, domestic, and foreign policies that he's glued to, no matter what. Obama insists he's "pretty pragmatic" about how he achieves his goals. Nothing could be further from the truth. A pragmatist would change failing policies or at least tweak them. Obama wants to double down.

That his policies have produced an extraordinarily weak recovery from the 2007-09 recession is indisputable. Economic growth is stagnant, unemployment is in a holding pattern above 7 percent, the number of Americans with jobs is fewer than in 2007, and millions have dropped out of the job market altogether. Yet the president refuses to alter his policies or seriously reconsider them.

On the contrary, "what's hampering us right now is not that we don't have good policy ideas," Obama said at a Democratic National Committee fundraiser in San Francisco. "We know what works." If Republicans would agree to spend more on infrastructure, education, and research, the economy would surge.

And last week Obama found still another type of spending that boosts the economy: food stamps. Every food stamp dollar "generates up to $1.80 in economic activity . . . for the over 230,000 retail food outlets that participate in the program," a White House paper claimed.

Notice that Obama's plan is government-only—that is, spending he controls. Rather than offer incentives to the private sector to invest in growth and jobs, he brags about raising taxes on those earning more than $400,000 a year. That's the investor class. "We changed a tax code that was too skewed towards the wealthiest Americans," he said at the DreamWorks movie studio in Glendale, California.

Higher taxes and increased spending are hardy perennials on Obama's wish list. Under duress in 2011, he agreed to the Budget Control Act that established tight spending caps. Now he's endorsed a Democratic budget for 2014 that exceeds the caps by $91 billion and would boost taxes by $1 trillion over the next 10 years.

At the moment, Obama's biggest bugaboo is the sequester, which mandates across-the-board cuts in discretionary spending, $109 billion in the 2014 budget alone. Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell has proposed "flexibility" to allow Obama to choose what programs are cut and by how much. The president rejected the idea. He wants to replace at least some of the cuts with tax hikes, not other cuts.

So, too, with tax reform, which to most people means eliminating loopholes and preferences, broadening the tax base, and reducing rates. Obama has a different vision. He would wipe out tax breaks, then spend a sizable chunk of the proceeds on infrastructure. Republicans would never accept this, as the president must know.

He's also endorsed lowering the corporate tax rate from its current 35 percent. But this turns out to be merely a talking point. He's invested no political capital in persuading Congress to trim corporate taxes. Rather, he's eager to tax overseas profits by American companies who've already been taxed by foreign countries.

On domestic policy, it's true that Obama once was leery of same-sex marriage. But did anyone think he really opposed it? Everyone in the political community knew better. Obama was posturing for political purposes in the 2008 presidential campaign. The same was true with his opposition to an individual mandate to buy health insurance. He reversed that upon taking up the health care issue in 2009.

What about Obamacare, which crashed on launching? All the delays and fixes are procedural. There's no evidence Obama is rethinking the convoluted structure and substance of the health plan itself.

On foreign policy, there are two threads in Obama's thinking, both

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pursued in spite of their cost. One is his willingness to toss American allies overboard to cultivate adversaries. To "reset" relations with Russia, he reneged on a plan to put missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. The wooing of Russia failed. And relations worsened with all three countries.

Since Obama became president, America has strayed from its historic role as protector of Asian nations against Chinese expansionism and bullying. They were relieved when Obama announced a "pivot to Asia" in 2012, only the shift never occurred. This year he canceled a trip to a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, further worrying Asian allies.

But last week he bucked China, thrusting the United States into a dispute over its claim to an "air defense identification zone" in the East China Sea. Two unarmed B-52s flew over the zone without notifying the Chinese, demonstrating the United States won't accept the Chinese claim. It's unclear if this represents a change in policy in Asia or a onetime rebuke.

Far more significant was the interim deal announced last week on Iran's nuclear program, the culmination of years of Obama's deference to Iranian leaders. We now know why he balked at aiding Syrian rebels and offering support to antiregime protesters in Iran: He was seeking full-blown negotiations to curb Iran's quest for nuclear weapons. Obama brushed aside resistance to the one-sided deal—it favors Iran—by America's two strongest allies in the Middle East, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

In his pursuit of Iran, one sees Obama's stubbornness in action. The fact that Iranians were responsible for American deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan didn't dissuade him. Nor did Iran's lies in denying the breadth of its nuclear program or its goal of building nuclear weapons. Nor did its unreliability as a negotiating partner.

Obama scoffs at the notion he's "an ideological guy." Only someone who thinks the more spent on food stamps, the better the economy could believe that. ♦

NEWSCOM

The Use and Abuse of Sanctions

The Iranian bomb is all that matters.

BY LEE SMITH

Last week's interim agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran over its nuclear weapons program offers the regime sanctions relief even as U.S. lawmakers, Republicans and Democrats, are demanding more and stricter sanctions. The White House counters that more sanctions will only narrow diplomatic channels, drive the Iranians away from the negotiating table, and lead to war. Critics of the deal argue that by providing sanctions relief Obama is simply feeding an Iranian beast hungry for more concessions.

Celebrating the deal in Tehran

Sanctions relief, as critics argue, is indeed likely irreversible, and Congress should certainly not let up in its push for more sanctions. However, the danger is that the fight over sanctions will continue to distract, as it already has, from the much more important battle to prevent the Islamic Republic from acquiring a nuclear weapon. Therefore, it would be useful to consider how the sanctions issue has been understood and used and to imagine how the regime in Tehran sees it.

The common wisdom, held by both the administration and opponents of the interim deal, is that sanctions forced the Iranians to the negotiating table. Why, reason critics, should we offer relief when pressure is what made the Iranians buckle in the first place? And yet the notion that sanctions did the trick is partly a function of mirror-imaging—the assumption that Iranian officials respond as American policymakers would to the same set of circumstances—and partly what the revolutionary regime calls *istikbar*, arrogance.

First of all, it's not clear how much sanctions really shaped the regime's decision-making. A recent three-part report from Reuters showed that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei heads a business empire worth at least $95 billion, a sum exceeding the value of Iran's annual petroleum exports. This enormous cushion means the regime is able to absorb quite a bit of economic pain without flinching. Sanctions may have hurt ordinary Iranians by sending the economy into a nosedive, but it's unclear why this would matter to a ruling clique that manages domestic unrest by shooting its own citizens in the streets.

But perhaps the key issue arguing against the notion that sanctions forced the Iranians to the table is this: No competent negotiator enters talks confessing weakness and petitioning for mercy. And yet this is the scenario the sanctions narrative puts forth—that the opening gambit of a people famous for their bargaining skills was

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to come to the Obama administration on bended knee.

In reality, it was the White House negotiating team that lost its way in the bazaar. The deal itself, in which the administration ignored six U.N. Security Council resolutions and implicitly acknowledged Iran's right to enrich uranium, is merely a flourish punctuating a prolonged period of self-abasement. From the Iranians' perspective, it must have seemed as if the White House was weak and desperate for a deal.

The administration, as we learned last week, had been engaged in secret talks with the Iranians since at least March if not earlier. It is not difficult to imagine the impression this must have made on the regime in Tehran and how Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei might have discussed the America file with subordinates: *The White House negotiates behind Israel's back*, observes Khamenei. *But we keep our scariest and most volatile assets, like Hezbollah, on a very loose leash to show our interlocutors that it would be wise to accept any offer as soon as possible. That the White House bargains in secret shows that they will take a deal so bad that they know before the fact that the Israelis would object*.

The White House's response to the election in June of Hassan Rouhani, and the media campaign it waged through press surrogates touting Rouhani's "moderation," also signaled America's anxiety for a deal. *The Americans have come down with Rouhani Fever*, Khamenei must have noted. *But they have been negotiating with our so-called hardliners for months now. All of the excitement about Rouhani ushering in a new age of comity and cooperation is simply political cover to prepare the U.S. public and American allies for a deal the White House has already decided to accept. This Obama is as mendacious as we are—except he's weak. We'll give him nothing but assurances, which, as a man who chronically confuses words with actions, he'll gladly pocket. In short, we've won. But one last thing: Tell the negotiators that we demand immediate sanctions relief. We won't haggle too much over numbers, any opening will prove sufficient to frame our victory.*

Here again the Iranians targeted American vulnerability, for the sanctions regime was always felt by this White House to be a burden. It was hard getting Russia and China on board, and even the Europeans, ever eager for Iranian contracts, found loopholes. Obama didn't want sanctions; it was Congress that forced them on the White House. Even advocates of sanctions recognized they were of limited value—they weren't a magic bullet but were part of a larger toolkit to stop Iran without having to resort to military force. And if the United States did eventually have to strike Iranian nuclear facilities, at least the sanctions regime would show the Europeans that all nonmilitary options had been exhausted.

In time, Obama came to see that he could use the existence of sanctions to persuade Congress and the Israelis that he was serious about stopping an Iranian bomb. In other words, sanctions were cynically invoked by the White House both to hide the truth that Obama wasn't going to follow through on his own stated policy of using military force against Iran in the event all else failed, and to deter the Israelis from a military strike of their own.

Again, it's instructive to see the sanctions issue from the Iranian perspective. As they see it, sanctions must be something like performance art, lots of movement and drama that only signaled the White House had no stomach for military action. Rather, sanctions represented the furthest limit to which the Americans were willing to go to stop Iran from going nuclear—not far enough. Sanctions relief would show that the American policy of prevention had entirely collapsed. And that's why the Iranians went to Geneva, not because sanctions drove them to the table, but because they wanted the administration to agree publicly to what it had already conceded in its secret talks with Tehran. The reason sanctions relief is so important to the Iranians is that it makes Obama a partner in facilitating their nuclear weapons program.

The importance of sanctions relief lies not in the amount of money—whether it's $7 billion or several times more than that—to which Tehran will now have access. The cash is not insignificant—a fraction of it would go a long way toward prosecuting the Iranians' war in Syria—but the main issue is that even a small erosion of sanctions will give rise to a powerful global lobby that will do much of the heavy lifting on behalf of the deal. To put it in language that comports with Obama's worldview, sanctions relief creates an entitlement program with lots of stakeholders, from Russian oligarchs and the Chinese Army to EU officials and American companies, determined to see it succeed.

With sanctions relief, the Iranian economy has gone from being a bad bet that might get you kicked out of the international financial system to a huge opportunity. All that these potential "stakeholders" care about is getting in early enough to win a piece of the pie. The Iranian press is already reporting indirect contacts between Tehran and American energy concerns, and a recent French report claims that General Motors and Boeing are interested in exploring deals. Who in their right mind would sabotage an agreement between the White House and the Islamic Republic that is potentially worth hundreds of billions of dollars and, just as important for the Western democracies, jobs?

It's little wonder that British foreign secretary William Hague warned the Israelis not to undermine the agreement. He's speaking for everyone in the world aside from Israel and America's now-abandoned Arab allies, especially Saudi Arabia. Were the Israelis to strike Iranian nuclear facilities, not only would it shake global energy prices, it would also scatter all that potential gold, and political patronage, to the winds.

In Obama's hands, first sanctions and now sanctions relief are simply tools to deter the Israelis from crashing the party and striking Iran. To focus too narrowly on the debate over sanctions, then, means letting the White House change the subject. The issue is not sanctions but preventing the Iranians from getting a bomb. ♦

Wise Beyond Their Years

The young won't show up for Obamacare.

BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON

Former president Bill Clinton said recently that Obamacare "only works . . . if young people show up." But it won't work—because young people won't show up. Obamacare gives them too many reasons not to do so.

One reason is that Obamacare makes things more expensive for them. The Obamacare arithmetic depends on more young people choosing to buy government-approved insurance than were previously willing to buy cheaper, often better, insurance through the free market.

In its government-run exchanges, Obamacare raises premiums for the young by suspending actuarial science. It forbids insurers from considering some variables that are actuarially relevant to health care, such as sex and health, while also limiting their ability to take age into account in an actuarially based way. Under ordinary principles of insurance, a healthy young person pays a lot less than a person nearing retirement. Under Obamacare, that's not so. Yet President Obama's centerpiece legislation depends upon young people's willingness to pay these artificially inflated premiums.

Another reason the young are unlikely to show up in sufficient numbers is that Obamacare gives many of them an easy out: They can stay on their parents' insurance free of charge until they're 26. As for the rest, with the elimination of preexisting conditions as a barrier to buying health insurance, many will choose to go without coverage until they're sick or injured.

In other words, Obamacare makes insurance more costly while simultaneously making it less necessary—especially for the young.

...and refuse to enroll, while you're at it.

In order to induce young people to buy in, Obamacare uses the carrot of taxpayer-funded subsidies and the stick of compulsion, enforced by the IRS's collection of a fine from those who fail to show proof of government-approved health insurance.

But how attractive will these subsidies actually be? A new study by the 2017 Project finds that the subsidies—which flow to insurance companies, not to individual citizens—benefit the old at the expense of the young, and the near-poor at the expense of the middle class. At a given income, the younger you are, the lower your subsidy will be (assuming you qualify for a subsidy at all). In fact, it turns out that younger Americans will generally be better off financially if they simply pay the fine and forgo the expensive product that the government is trying to compel them to buy. In the long run, Obamacare's website "glitches" will pale in importance next to nonparticipation by the young.

The 2017 Project study (online at 2017project.org) examines premiums and subsidies for plans sold through Obamacare exchanges in the 50 largest counties in the United States (excluding Massachusetts, which Obamacare allows to play by different rules, and Hawaii and Maryland, where the state-based exchanges weren't working and thus did not allow for data-collection). Those 50 counties comprise more than 29 percent of the U.S. population. The study compares the costs and subsidies under Obamacare for various ages and incomes, in 5-year and $5,000 increments, starting with a 21-year-old making $20,000.

The findings are striking. Consider a 26-year-old (newly ineligible for Mom and Dad's coverage) making $30,000 a year. Across these 50 counties, the average cost of the cheapest subsidized plan—the cheapest "bronze" plan—available to someone of that age from the Obamacare exchanges would be $2,134 a year. That's roughly three times the cost of the cheapest plan this person could have bought pre-Obamacare, according to figures from the Government Accountability Office. Meanwhile, this 26-year-old's taxpayer-funded subsidy, on average, would be $482, or just 23 percent of the premium. By contrast, a 61-year-old making that same $30,000 would, on average, get a subsidy of $4,018, covering 82 percent of the $4,885 premium for someone of that age.

In the normal world of actuarially based insurance, a health plan would cost a 61-year-old about five times as much as a 26-year-old, reflecting the roughly fivefold difference in the expected price of their care. But in the peculiar redistributive world of Obamacare, that notion is turned on

BROOKS KRAFT / CORBIS / AP

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its head. Once the respective subsidies are factored in, the 61-year-old would pay, on average, $867 a year in premiums, while the 26-year-old would pay, on average, $1,652. That's right—under Obamacare, the person who's expected to cost the health care system only about one-fifth as much would, on average, have to pay about twice as much.

Take another example: a 31-year-old making $35,000 a year. On average, the cheapest bronze premium for this person would be $2,340—also roughly three times the price of the cheapest plan available pre-Obamacare. The taxpayer-funded subsidy, on average, would be $258. Meanwhile, a 61-year-old making that same $35,000 would, on average, get a subsidy of $3,223—more than 12 times as much.

Moreover, if a 31-year-old man making $35,000 and a 26-year-old woman making $30,000 were to get married, giving them a joint income of $65,000, their combined subsidy would drop, on average, from $740 to zero, as Obamacare's steep marriage penalty kicks in.

These figures reflect *average* subsidies across the 50 largest counties. For young people, however, the averages are inflated by hefty subsidies available to them in a few places—particularly in New York, where higher subsidies are needed because young people's premiums have been even more dramatically spiked by New York's outright ban on age-rating. For the young, therefore, the *median*—or typical—subsidy is much lower than the average subsidy. Indeed, the median subsidy available to the 26-year-old making $30,000 would be $77 for the cheapest bronze plan, covering a mere 4 percent of the premium. For the 31-year-old making $35,000, the median subsidy would be zero.

Meanwhile, the median subsidy available to a 61-year-old making $30,000 would be over $4,000, and the median subsidy for a 61-year-old making $35,000 would be over $3,000.

So: The typical twentysomething making $30,000 would get a taxpayer-funded subsidy of less than $100. The typical person between 21 and 41 making $35,000 would get no subsidy at all. And each would be on the hook for a post-subsidy premium of around $2,000, about three times the cost of insurance pre-Obamacare.

Again, that's for the cheapest bronze plan. Such plans routinely have deductibles over $5,000—double the $2,500 deductibles for many pre-Obamacare "catastrophic" plans—and narrow doctor networks.

Then there is a disincentive unrelated to cost: Simply signing up for plans on the Obamacare exchanges invites the very real prospect of identity theft, as former Social Security commissioner Michael Astrue and others have warned.

In light of all this, many young people may decide it makes far more sense for them to pay the fine than pay the premium. The previously mentioned 26-year-old making $30,000 would be fined just $203—a pittance compared with the average post-subsidy premium of $1,652. The 31-year-old making $35,000 would be fined $253—nothing next to the average post-subsidy premium of $2,082. In paying the fine, each could take comfort in knowing that, in case of expensive illness or injury, it would always be possible to buy insurance at the next open enrollment period, which would usually be less than six months away.

Regardless of whether any given individual chooses to pay the low fine or the high premium, this much seems clear: Under Obamacare, there is more incentive for previously *insured* young people to decide to go without insurance than for previously *uninsured* young people to decide to buy insurance.

In short, Obamacare is not for the young. It artificially raises their insurance costs, limits their choices, jeopardizes their privacy, and offers them meager taxpayer-funded subsidies in comparison with those given to older people of the same means. But Obamacare depends on enticing the young to sign up. If young people ignore this administration's propaganda, take a look at the data, and think for themselves, they won't. ♦

The Government Isn't Us

It works for us.

BY FRED BAUER

A Connecticut Tea Partier making the point in Hartford, 2009

Over the spring and summer of 2013, perhaps still sunning in his November 2012 victory and ideologically extrapolating from this win, President Obama attempted to press the case that skeptics about federal power were *outré* paranoiacs. At the Ohio State University commencement in May, the president called upon his listeners to reject the voices of those who "warn that tyranny is always lurking just around the corner." In July, he trumpeted his administration's commitment to technological innovation and managerial efficiency, arguing that it was "up to each of us and every one of us to make [government] work better." We "all have a stake in government success—because the government is us."

In light of these bold declarations, it is grimly amusing that the rollout of the Obamacare website and the individual mandate should be so flawed. The bureaucratic progressivism for which the president advocates requires faith on the part of the public in the efficiency and competence of government. When that faith is shaken, big-government schemes lose some of their luster. One of the main reasons to continue to assert the distinction between government and "us" is government's limited competence: The fact that government is not omniscient offers a very practical reason why it should not be omnipotent. Like any other institution, government cannot know all the facts on the ground, nor can it know the perfect way to deal with or make use of the facts that it does know.

The Obamacare debacle reminds us again of the practical irreducibility of "us" to government. Indeed, the distinction between "government" and "us" is central to the project of republican liberty for the United States. One of the keys to maintaining the tradition of limited government is recognizing that it is part—and only part—of the broader society in which it operates. Our government, as Lincoln said, is of the people, by the people, and for the people—but it is not the people.

The people are a mixed lot: young and old; Republican, Democratic, and independent; married and unmarried; Christian, Jewish, Muslim, atheist, agnostic, Buddhist, and Hindu; for higher taxes and for lower taxes; unemployed and working; rich and poor; healthy and sick; and countless other permutations. Government cannot be everything to everybody. It cannot embody all the diverse wishes, hopes, and desires of the people—nor should it try.

The very opening of *Federalist* 1 implies that Alexander Hamilton, at least, was very aware that government was distinct from the governed. He acknowledges that the document forged by the Constitutional Convention affects "many particular interests" and argues:

> Among the most formidable of the obstacles which the new Constitution will have to encounter may readily be distinguished the obvious interest of a certain class of men in every State to resist all changes which may hazard a diminution of the power, emolument and consequence of the offices they hold under the State-establishments—and the perverted ambition of another class of men, who will either hope to aggrandise themselves by the confusions of their country, or will flatter themselves into fairer prospects of elevation from the subdivision of the empire into several partial confederacies, than from its union under one government.

Hamilton's immediate purpose is to suggest that some in the new United States believed that they could lose the power of various state offices in a newly energized federal union and that others hoped to gain power for themselves in the dissolution of the United States into various distinct commonwealths; both

SAGE ROSS

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factions would need to be countered in order to ensure the ratification of the Constitution. But Hamilton's operating assumption in this analysis is that some men and women gain power from government—the very act of forming a government creates a group of winners.

Governments both create and distribute power. Governments (or men and women under the auspices of government) tax, spend, go to war, imprison, and so forth. Some are appointed officers of the government and thereby gain the ability to apply or to manipulate this power, which they might not have as private individuals. This act of empowering immediately distinguishes the government from the people as a whole: The government and its officers have distinct powers that are not shared by all people. A private citizen can't legally pardon a murderer, nor can a private citizen demand tax payments from another.

In a democratic republic, the government may draw in some abstract way from the wellspring of the people, but we might consider government to exist as a series of institutions that are distinct from the people as a whole. Local, state, and federal agencies, legislatures and executives at various levels, and the court system, among other entities, comprise this web of institutions. In the United States, government, by design, does not speak with a unified voice; instead, it consists of these various institutions entering into a dialogue with each other.

There is another side to Hamilton's argument (one found throughout the whole of the *Federalist* project): government is not the people, but it can be an instrument at the people's disposal for protecting their rights. As he writes in *Federalist* 1, "vigour of government is essential to the security of liberty." As the Founders well knew, the flame of liberty might burn brightly, but it can be imperiled at times. The institutions of our government can protect us from threats from abroad as well as from betrayals of liberty at home. Chaos and turmoil are often the greatest threats to civil liberties. Law and order provide the foundation for the kind of stability helpful for the maintenance of liberty, and the institutions of government help provide this ameliorative grounding.

But the Founders and their successors were well aware that government could destroy liberty as well as defend it. Hamilton and his contemporaries saw how a monarch could go rogue, as we might say now. By the Civil War, Americans had seen decades of racial slavery sanctioned and enforced by governments at various levels. Our own time has seen government-supported segregation and racial disenfranchisement along with a host of other abuses of government power, ranging from corrupt city officials to politically motivated prosecutions to misuse of the IRS. Power always has the capacity to corrupt, and government bodies, the seats of power, are always liable to corruption.

The Founders responded to this potential for corruption by decentralizing government authority, using the principle of federalism to create tensions and distinctions between state and federal authorities and breaking the federal government into three branches in order to divide power. One detail that President Obama and some of his allies may miss is that many of those whom they lambaste as antigovernment zealots are not, in fact, asking for a destruction of government: They instead are asking for a rebalancing of institutions within the government as a whole. Consider the Tea Party federalists who seek to elevate the power of state governments at the expense of federal power. Whatever one might think of this approach as a practical matter, it's hard to call it antigovernment.

This play between institutional authority and various levers of power can often advance the interests of freedom and of democratic governance. For instance, some states instituted suffrage for women decades in advance of the Nineteenth Amendment, and the courts have long held a role in protecting rights and freedoms from the overeager reach of the executive and legislative branches. Moreover, this diffusion of authority makes it harder for any single narrow clique to take control of all the levels of power and institute tyranny.

Obviously the current government is not a tyranny. But the fear that any government—even one of great initial virtue and prudence—could degenerate into one was a cardinal concern of the Founders. Though some Founders (such as Jefferson) might have celebrated a slightly more volatile body politic, Hamilton and others sought to make both tyranny and violent insurrection as unlikely as possible. The diffused, heterogeneous nature of the government as envisioned by the Founders strengthens rather than weakens the foundations of the American republican experiment. Through affirming the limits of government—through insisting that it is distinct from "us"—we advance a government in which we can actually have some small faith.

Recognizing the limits of government, we can work to improve it while also realizing the contingent nature of any potential improvements we may make. Keeping these limits in mind can help prevent us from making a false idol of government—of expecting that it could be the immanentized hopes of everyone for everything. Government can be a vehicle for expressing Americans' hopes, wishes, and dreams, but this expression remains partial and limited.

The Founders and generations of Americans after them recognized the great potential of governance for advancing liberty: There's a reason why the Founders instituted, and later generations defended, the United States as a national government. But part of realizing that potential depends upon recognizing the distinction between the institutions of government and the people.

A watchful eye for danger and an insistence upon the difference of the people from the government serve to legitimize government. The price of liberty includes eternal suspicion of the uses to which the instruments of government are put. ♦

The Oil Spill Windfall

A test for Republicans.

BY DANIEL M. ROTHSCHILD

Can the payout at least go well?

A federal court in Louisiana will decide in the next few months how much oil company BP must pay in Clean Water Act penalties as a result of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The fine could total as much as $18 billion and, whatever the court determines, will rank among the largest in American history. How it gets spent will serve as a key test of the ability of conservative governors and legislatures to manage wisely the unfettered resources for which they so frequently pine.

Under the terms of the RESTORE Act, which Congress passed in 2012 with strong bipartisan support, 80 percent of civil and administrative fines from the Deepwater Horizon spill go to a trust fund for environmental and economic restoration in the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and Texas. Of this, 65 percent goes directly to state and local governments for use in resource restoration, economic development, infrastructure building, and increasing resiliency against future disasters. All five states, of course, have GOP governors and Republican majorities in their legislatures.

Depending on how state officials spend this money, the RESTORE Act could go down as a paradigm of effective oversight or as the conservative analog of the stimulus. Either way, conservatives will be in the driver's seat. The only way to ensure that states allocate the funds properly is to make the spending process radically transparent and targeted towards genuine public goods.

Because the money comes from a civil judgment, not taxpayers' pockets, conservatives and taxpayer watchdogs may think that the RESTORE funds aren't worthy of oversight. This would be a mistake with far-reaching consequences.

The RESTORE Act provides an opportunity to implement good policy with benefits for both the environment and the economy in the Gulf Coast states. Across the coast, environmental stewardship and economic growth go hand-in-hand. In Louisiana alone, commercial saltwater fishing is worth $3.1 billion and supports 34,000 jobs. Tourism in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana brings in $23 billion a year, predominantly along the coast. Coastal wetlands and barrier islands furnish a number of benefits for people living inland, among them cleaner drinking water and attenuated storm surges.

Spent properly, RESTORE Act funds will go to legitimate functions of government: developing public goods, creating infrastructure, and undoing decades of failed federal resource management policies. The RESTORE Act offers a onetime chance for governments to address lingering and economically significant environmental issues.

Without oversight, however, it could turn into just another slush fund. And the ramifications for conservatives, both politically and policy-wise, could be disastrous. Besides the potential for waste, fraud, and abuse, there's the possibility funds could go toward less-than-worthy ends. Small amounts of money from earlier settlements have already started to flow, and the results aren't entirely encouraging. Mississippi, for example, has earmarked $15 million for a new minor league baseball stadium in Biloxi. The city has, as of yet, no minor league team.

Two major threats to conservative governance come to mind when considering how the money might be spent. First, there's the risk lawmakers will steer funds to various initiatives with few or no environmental benefits and negative economic benefits—dubious "green jobs" projects and the like.

Worse, and less obvious, while

INFROGMATION OF NEW ORLEANS

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the RESTORE Act offers a onetime windfall, it's possible that funded projects could create ongoing liabilities for taxpayers. In other words, conservatives could inadvertently use this windfall to grow the governments of the Gulf Coast states permanently. One of the great conservative selling points of the RESTORE Act was that it created no new bureaucracies or perpetual claims on the public fisc. It would be a shame to undermine this principle in execution.

To guard against these dangers, the states receiving money under the RESTORE Act should spend it in a completely transparent fashion, not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it's a crucial test of conservatives' ability to govern. What does that mean in practice?

At a minimum, transparent implementation means that all potential projects, along with their accompanying cost-benefit analyses, should be posted online long before funding decisions are made. This is essential to discovering if proponents of a project are cooking the books on its benefits, as has sometimes been the case with environmental enterprises. Contractor and subcontractor names and key information should likewise be disclosed, in as close to real time as possible.

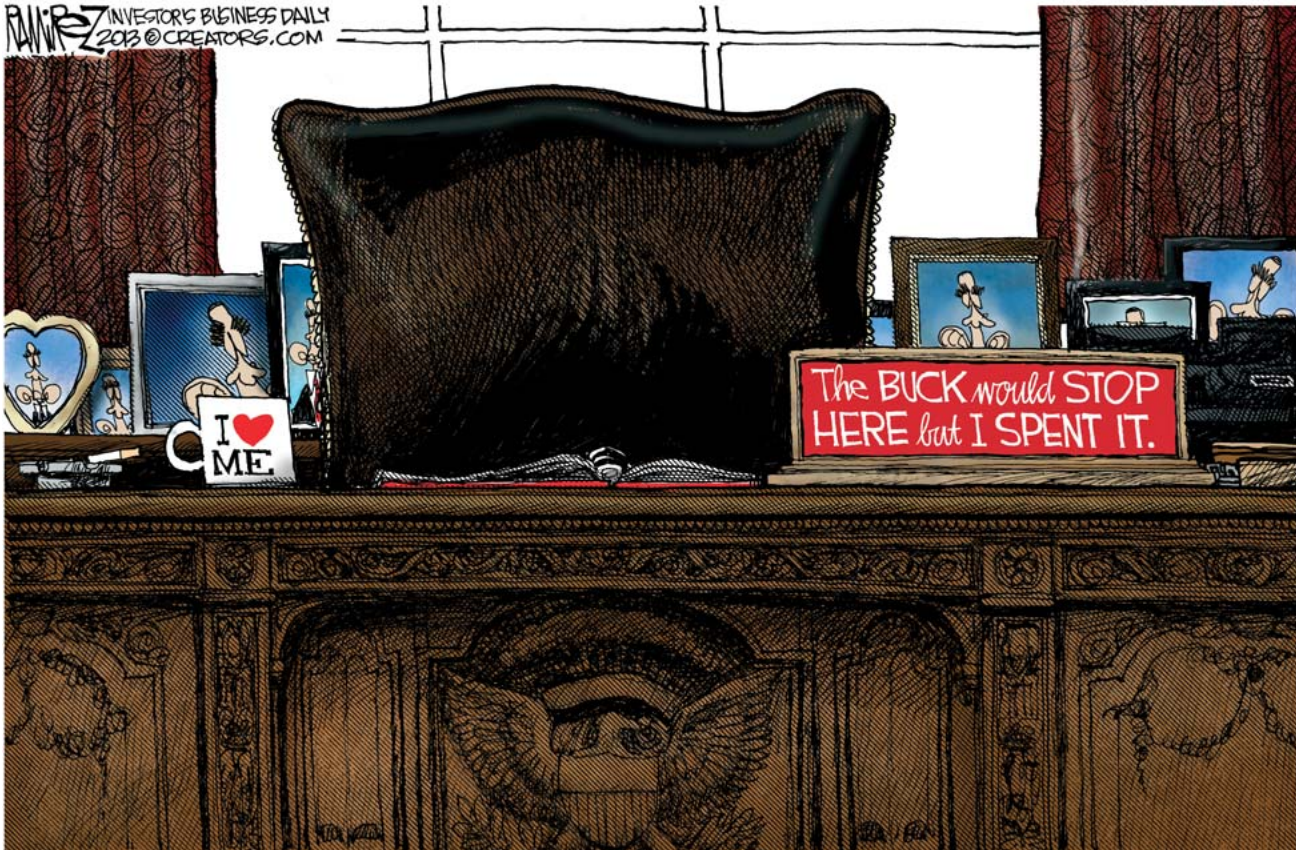
Every authority that touches RESTORE Act funds should conduct all of its meetings and deliberations in public and publish all requests for proposals and other funding documents. This means 100 percent transparency—no executive sessions or no-bid contracts.

Fortunately, we're seeing some good news on this front. Mississippi has established a website for citizens to suggest projects and see what is being proposed. As of today, it's short of what a fully functional transparency website would be, but it's a step in the right direction.

In 2007, Louisiana developed a long-term coastal master plan to guide protection and rebuilding of the state's coastal lands. The most recent iteration, written in 2012, helps prioritize potential spending. This isn't a transparency effort per se, but it does provide a benchmark against which RESTORE Act spending can be judged: If it's not going to high-value master plan projects, why not?

With transparency in place, journalists, government watchdogs, and activists need to keep an eye on how projects are awarded and where the money goes—and keep the pressure on legislators, executive officials, and local governments to neither squander funds on goofy ideas nor create long-term obligations for taxpayers.

It's clear that when President Obama promised to run the "most transparent administration in history," he, to employ the *New York Times* editorial board's phraseology on such matters, "misspoke." The conservative governors and legislatures along the Gulf Coast have a chance to demonstrate true transparency and well-implemented conservative policy. They shouldn't squander the opportunity. ♦



Hard Sell

Going door-to-door for Obamacare

By Matt Labash

Hollywood, Fla.

Standing here on the streets of Hollywood with two comely Obamacare cheerleaders by my side, I'm feeling fired up and ready to go. I'm feeling like the change I've been waiting for. I'm feeling like whatever Obama cliché you can think of. And all I want to say, like the late Todd Beamer before me, is, "Let's roll." Or more like, "Let's enroll." Because much as Beamer, God rest his soul, took on the terrorists who tried to take down America, we are now in a similar cataclysmic fight: the fight to guarantee that every American has the right to buy overpriced health insurance on a glitchy website, under threat of punitive tax penalties.

I've come to Florida to go door-to-door with the foot soldiers of Get Covered America, the boots-on-the-ground division of Enroll America, which bills itself as a "nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to maximize the number of uninsured Americans who enroll in health coverage made available by the Affordable Care Act." These Obamacare evangelists are very serious about the "nonpartisan" nature of their business. Nearly every Enroll America staffer I speak to emphasizes it, often repeatedly. And while it might strain credulity that an organization is nonpartisan which seeks to make sure people are Obamacared for by setting $100 million fundraising goals for itself, and conducting $5 million ad campaigns, and targeting 10 different states, 9 of which are coincidentally run by Republican governors, I choose to take them at their word.

After all, Enroll America boasts all manner of nonpartisan credentials. Most of its staffers seem to have worked in the nonpartisan Obama presidential campaigns of 2008 or 2012, often both. Its president, Anne Filipic, served as deputy executive director of the nonpartisan Democratic National Committee, and came here straight from the nonpartisan White House Office of Public Engagement. The nonpartisan Obamacare czar, Kathleen Sebelius (whom Filipic also worked for), has admitted putting the arm on companies to make donations to Enroll America, sparking several nonpartisan congressional investigations.

And after decidedly partisan conservative gadfly James O'Keefe and his undercover Project Veritas crew caught Texas Enroll America communications director Chris Tarango on tape conspiring to help obtain a private list of potential Obamacare enrollee data for political purposes, a national Enroll America spokesman told me again: "Enroll America is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization," it doesn't technically enroll people "so we don't have any sensitive personal data," and though the video "does not show any violation of our nonprofit status," even the suggestion of any violation is "inappropriate" and the "employee seen in the video has resigned from his role with Enroll America."

With my nonpartisan concerns allayed, we're ready to roll! At the Hollywood public library, I meet up with Get Covered America's Katie Vicsik and Rhianna Hurt, 2 of 28 Florida staffers (they also have nearly 1,800 volunteers on the ground in the state). They are twentysomething, earnest, clipboard-carrying, and as adorable as speckled pups. They're the Platonic ideal of Obama campaign staffers (which they both were) from back in the salad days, when the winds of hope'n'change blew across the prairie, and there was still dew on the world.

To be sure, these Obamacare evangelists are not insurance saleswomen. They're not closers. They don't actually sign people up for policies in the Obamacare marketplace, but rather, direct them how to do so. They sing the attractively anodyne highlights of the program—"financial help is available," no discrimination for preexisting conditions. They give phone numbers and information to help people meet in person with a Navigator (a contractor paid to guide enrollees through the process) and circumvent the plagued website. They are goodwill ambassadors. They are, in a sense, storytellers. And it's a hard gig to be an Obamacare storyteller these days, because for the last two months, there have been so many stories told. Not good stories, either. In fact, if Obamacare threatens to bankrupt any industry, it's the liberal-media-bias-watchdog industry. Since now, news outlets across the spectrum are falling over each other to tell Obamacare stories, mostly about how lousy Obamacare is.

They tell stories of how the cancellation-to-enrollment ratio is 50-to-1. Or how 34 times more people are interested in buying guns than Obamacare. Or how only five people enrolled in D.C., one enrolled in North Carolina, and none in Oregon. Or how cancer patients are losing their doctors. Or how premiums will increase by an average of

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41 percent. Or how 40 percent of HealthCare.gov's "back office functions" haven't been built yet. Or the story of the Brooklyn couple who are considering divorce just so they can get better rates on their newly hiked insurance. Or the rare Obamacare feel-good story: In Colorado, a dog was (mistakenly) enrolled.

These, as you've probably guessed, are not the stories Get Covered America tells. On their website, many regular ol' Americans tell tales of triumph, of finding affordable insurance!, with lots of exclamation points!!! and a noticeable lack of last names!!!! This takes the burden off reporters to check them. Because when Enroll America provided an Obamacare success story to hungry reporters shortly after Obamacare launched—featuring an interviewee who also happened to have been an Obama campaign volunteer—he turned out not to have completed the enrollment process after all.

On the ground, however, Katie and Rhianna are light touches. They don't hard-sell. They don't discuss premiums (Enroll America's internal polling showed that discussing prices, even when emphasizing subsidies, was death to prospective enrollees). They don't use flashpoint words like "Obamacare" if it can be helped—only "the Affordable Care Act." All they want to do, Katie tells me, is to provide information, to apprise people of their options. They are not interested in political debates. "We always stress that we're nonpartisan," says Katie.

So I've heard.

Rhianna, right, and Katie pitch enrollment to Joyce Lipman.

With their microtargeted lists, we start hitting likely uninsured addresses in a semi-sketchy, palm-fronded neighborhood of cramped condos and low-slung bungalows, the kind with window-air units and burglar bars. On a Saturday evening, nobody's home most places. Some, emphatically not, with lock-boxes on their doorknobs and the mailboxes taped shut so no junk mail—say, a Lillian Vernon catalog or an Affordable Care Act flier—can be placed in them. At one condo, after Katie introduces herself, a harried man speaks to us from behind the door, his dog going off in the background, the red tendrils in the whites of his eyes illuminated like warning flares. "This is a bad time," he says. He looks like he's had a few of those.

Others already have insurance. Or they're in a hurry and can't talk now. The girls remain stalwart, dutifully soldiering on. I ask Katie if she has insurance from the Obamacare exchange. She's insured through Enroll America, she tells me, and is quite happy with it. "If you like it, and get it through your employer, you can keep it," she says, almost touchingly.

As we walk the streets, we make small talk. They are buoyant and charming and relentlessly positive. Trying to stir things up a bit, I ask how things go at their Get Covered America "house parties" for the volunteers. Are there Jell-O shots? Is there drinking out of navels? Maybe a little twerking—I hear the kids today like to twerk. "They supply snacks, maybe wine or something," says Katie, not rising to the bait. "I think that's good because it helps volunteers meet other like-minded people."

The girls tell me that they're heartened by their experiences. They see people getting affordable health care, and being educated about their options. As of yet, they haven't encountered any of the 300,000 (minimum) Floridians who've had their insurance canceled. They say they haven't seen the hostility, when I ask if they've gotten heckled, pelted with rotten produce, or assaulted by Sean Hannity-watchers. At their tabling/enrollment events with Navigators, Katie sees people zipping through the site in 20 minutes. "I'm encouraged by seeing that. I think the numbers are going to rise," she says. (They have nowhere else to go, at the moment—as of the beginning of November, only 3,571 Floridians had successfully signed up.)

From here, things quickly go south. At what looks like a hoarder's house—detritus tumbling out of the living room, unopened FedExes sitting on broken porch furniture—a graying woman named Joyce Lipman answers the knock. Katie makes her sunny pitch, saying where she's from and how her "grassroots organization" wants to "educate folks about what their new health insurance options are."

"You mean Obamacare?" Joyce says, a contemptuous edge in her voice.

Joyce is then off to the races with a 15-minute harangue on all her health problems, and how the insurance at the hospital where she works now sucks because of Obamacare. She tells of her diabetes, and the testing strips she can no longer afford. She shows us the hole in her gum, left by recurring mouth tumors. It's getting uncomfortable.

Katie just wants her to take a pamphlet so Joyce will know what her options are, and what coverage she's entitled to. The woman needs supplemental insurance, she admits, now that Obamacare has sent her deductible skyrocketing

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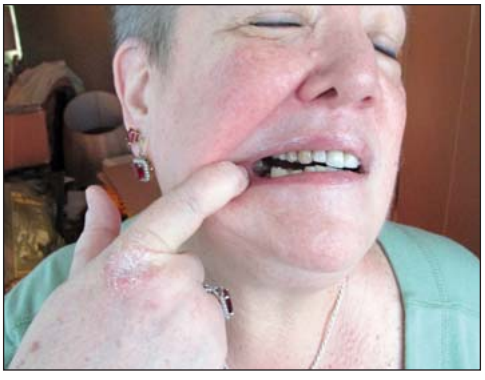
from $400 to $1,500. She's now getting to the point where she has to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine. Everybody at her work is incensed, she insists. While I'm not entirely clear how her employer's insurance was bunged up by Obamacare (even after I try fruitlessly to pin down the details in all the excitement), Joyce is 100 percent convinced. Thus illustrating an important Obamacare reality: It has now achieved such negative critical mass that it not only gets blamed for what it does do, but for what it doesn't. In North Carolina recently, a Department of Transportation official issued a traffic alert after an accident. It warned of "Women Drivers, Rain, Obama Care."

As the girls try to collect a phone number for follow-up before slinking off, Joyce is still giving us the business. She voted for Obama—"twice!"—she says. "But this is going to be a backlash like you would not believe! . . . Republicans will rule the House and the Senate! . . . They're not thinking this through!"



Want to see my tumor? Thanks, Obamacare.

A few houses later, Rhianna tries to straighten out an address on her list with two guys standing on a porch—one African American, wearing flip-flops and jogging shorts with no shirt, the other looking like the Cuban-American rapper Pitbull. They exchange pleasantries, and Rhianna asks if they both have insurance and are pleased with it. Yes, they assent.

But when I ask the gents if they have any intention of signing up for Obamacare, they start laughing—at first politely, then almost violently. "No!" says Pitbull. "And wait online 18 hours?" "OBAMAcare!" says Shirtless, elbowing Pitbull. Pitbull then starts making finger-pistol signs directing me down the street. "Keep on walking with Obamacare," he says, still convulsing.

Some 10 minutes later, we encounter Welly Corgelas, an African-American auto detailer, on the sidewalk in front of his house. He's talking to a crunchy-looking white guy named Jeff. When Katie moves in for the literature drop, Jeff sounds reasonably open to shopping around, even if he already has insurance. Though he seemed more interested before he knew who we were, when he thought we were petitioning on behalf of medical marijuana. I tell Jeff that Obamacare forces insurance companies to cover marijuana. It doesn't—at least I don't think so. But it does force them to cover obesity screening and counseling, among many other electives. So who knows? Give it time.

Welly is not having any of this, and decides to give the girls a workout. He's a little on the sore side. A small-business owner who is a healthy 37 years old, he just had his insurance plan canceled because it didn't meet the new Obamacare requirements. (His insurer, apparently, hasn't gotten the message about Obama's one-year patch, to forestall cancellations.) Katie, sensing opportunity, makes her push. But Welly says he wouldn't dare go near the website, with all the security concerns. When she floats the Navigator/phone support option as an alternative, he rebuffs her more aggressively.

"I'm going to be honest with you, I'm probably not going to call them," he says, breaking things down animatedly. "This is how I see it: The government is still running it. That's the problem. Insurance companies have always taken advantage of people. Government takes advantage of people. But like, the two of them are going to get together and create something that helps the people? I'm very skeptical, okay? Two barracudas getting together and saying we made something good for you? I just don't buy that."

If you want to help people get better insurance, says Welly, the government never had to be involved. They could've incentivized employers with tax breaks to better cover employees, he theorizes. "So you're saying just tell the businesses to pay more?" asks Katie, still thinking like an Obamissar. "No!" barks Welly. "Not tell the business, *incentivize* the business."

Right about now, a squad car pulls up, and a buzz-headed cop motions for Welly to come over. I am incensed on his behalf. A black man gets a little lippy with some white girls, and immediately the cop assumes he's harassing them? But the cop doesn't want to talk to Welly, he wants to talk to the girls. He asks them who they are and what they're doing. He explains the police have had some complaints about them causing disturbances in the neighborhood. They point out that they're just educating people about their health care options, and haven't disturbed anybody. I second them, as the Obamacare pom-pom girls are nothing if not mannerly. The cop says it doesn't matter. If they want to canvass door-to-door, they have to get a permit at city hall.

A smile creeps across Welly's face as the officer drives away. "What kind of sense does that make?" he says, now running up the score. "Think about that. You're doing the work of government, then the government comes over and says, 'Hey' . . . "

Katie is not amused. For the first and only time, I see her mercury rise. "We're a nonpartisan organization," she chirps. "We're just trying to get information to you."

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"I know," Welly says, feinting like a gentleman, but still grinning like he found money in the street. "So you guys have Obamacare?" he asks. Katie informs him they're already insured by their employer, and that if they like it, they can keep it.

"Yeah, well, that changes next year," Welly says, now cold as ice. "Remember the business mandate? They pushed it back."

One morning, I decide to see the net-cinching end of Enroll America's efforts by sitting in on an enrollment session that they cosponsor with two contracted Navigator groups, who help people in person sign up on the Obamacare insurance exchange. In a computer lab at Miami Dade College, a roomful of nearly 100 uninsured or underinsured citizens, with the help of 19 or so Navigators, take the daunting plunge into HealthCare.gov.

It goes—how to put it—eventfully. It's not the unmitigated disaster of by-now-familiar Obamacare lore. Nor is it as bad as a few days after my visit, when Kathleen Sebelius tows reporters to a Navigator session in Miami, only to have the system crash outright. At least the system is up today, though still buggier than a roach motel.

In the interest of not driving readers to slumber, I'll skip all the false starts, unexpected sign-offs, spooky security questions (they knew a street I lived on for three months 20 years ago), and all-around dysfunction. Overseeing us is my Navigator, who works for a health care concern I'll call the Ebola Foundation. He asks not to use his name, and when I tell him to pick a fake one, he settles on "Blade," adding, "Blade Sharpe. I've always wanted to be called that."

While much ugliness has been written about Obamacare Navigators—everything from their being illegal aliens to criminals—I have to say that I quite like Blade. He's gregarious and honest, making no attempt to cover for the website's prodigious failures. Plus, he makes colorful small talk during the many lulls when the "green circle of death" (signaling a page is about to time out) looms like the Reaper's scythe. I try to punch through the system myself, just to price plans, and when I jokingly say that it's kind of a personal question when asked for my sex, Blade expresses disappointment that the site offers only a binary gender choice. He sincerely informs me that he took a Queer Theory class in college, and it's no longer just LGBT rights we should be concerned with, but LGBTQIQAA. I make a note to Google it later, as I don't want to risk the site crashing now.

To give the CliffsNotes version of the three-hour session, it went a little like this: The woman beside me, named Jenny, a naturalized citizen from Ecuador, spent two and a half hours trying to crunch through the system before it finally returned her to the first page, then locked her out. She never even saw the prices. When Blade had her call the phone support hotline, they told her she'd need to wait three weeks to find out the status of her application. The same happened to her colleague, Sue, sitting next to her. They both need insurance now, because the endocrinologist they work for had to cancel theirs because it didn't meet Obamacare requirements. They're hoping not only that they can get insurance, but also that they can keep their jobs, since Jenny, who does billing for the doctor, says Obamacare is completely convoluting how, if at all, they'll be able to collect money from patients.

Two men sitting behind me get to a price list, though one wigs out because of the high premiums and leaves. The other finds a relatively cheap plan, but the deductible is so high, for his family of four, that he says, "I can't touch this." And he leaves, too. The two people on the other side of Jenny and Sue, whom I never even meet, leave after about 30 minutes. Blade suggests it's probably because of "sticker shock," if they even got that far. A recurring problem, he says, in his line of work.

All told, even with all the hand-holding Navigators, I'm assured by members of the two Navigator groups who worked the session that of the 100 or so prospects in attendance, exactly none walked out with a completed enrollment. As the room thins out after three hours of frustration, Blade takes a chair next to me, not so much sitting as sagging into it. He looks like someone let the air out of his balloon.

A former Obama campaign staffer, he believes in this stuff. He left his regular job at the Ebola Foundation to take this one-year Navigator gig, and he'll be out of a job when it ends. Even though his organization is fielding the contract, his old position will have been filled. So Blade's serious about seeing Obamacare work. But it's not working. I ask how this disaster, for lack of a better word, could happen. Blade has a theory.

He cites the movie *Apollo 13*. When it looks like the ship is going down, and someone says that this could be "the worst disaster NASA has ever experienced," Ed Harris's character says, "With all due respect, sir, I believe this is going to be our finest hour." This, he says, is the Obama administration's bunker-mentality.

"They're thinking of this as the biggest challenge of their lives," says Blade. "And if they overcome it, yeah, it'll be the biggest success. It'll be the Jets winning the Super Bowl in 1969. Nobody thought it would happen, and here we are."

For a moment, it looks like Blade's sails are filled once more with the winds of hope'n'change. Then they sag. "But that is looking like a bigger if. Every single day that goes by, the chances of the Jets winning the Super Bowl get slimmer and slimmer." ♦

Faith-Based Negotiations

When liberals meet mullahs

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

O believers, when you encounter the unbelievers marching to battle, turn not your backs to them. Whoso turns his back that day to them, unless withdrawing to fight again or removing to join another host, he is laden with the burden of God's anger, and his refuge is Hell—an evil homecoming!

—Koran, Surah VIII, Anfal ('The Spoils of War'), quoted by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in his speech to the Basij and Revolutionary Guards at the Grand Mosque of Ruhollah Khomeini, November 20, 2013

It's impossible to find a Western parallel to the *rahbar*, the "supreme leader" of the Islamic Republic of Iran, or to that regime's particular fusion of church and state. The caesaropapism of a Byzantine emperor, even one as religiously determined as Justinian, or a pope as imperial as Gregory VII, who humbled an emperor at Canossa, just doesn't capture the revolutionary, quintessentially modern nature of the *rahbar*. Following in the footsteps of Ayatollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic, Ali Khamenei tries to steal the charisma attached to Shiism's magical imams and fuse it to the raw, coercive power of a twentieth-century totalitarian dictator. Like his predecessor as supreme leader, Khamenei sees Islam as under siege from the West, and especially the United States. "In the military, political, and economic wars, in every arena where there is a test of strength, you, the believer, must stand firm against the enemy [the United States], your will must overcome the determination of the enemy," he told his militant audience at the Grand Mosque the day the Geneva nuclear negotiations began. And in this arduous and awesome struggle, the believer can use "heroic flexibility," he said, which doesn't mean "abandoning the ideals and aims of the Islamic regime," but rather "clever, artful maneuvering that allows for the believer to achieve his goals." "Step by step" the believer advances, as did the followers of the Prophet Muhammad at the battle of Badr, who were outmanned and underarmed, but proved triumphant and divided the spoils of their routed foe.

Here is perhaps the biggest contradiction of the nuclear talks: The Obama administration wants to believe that the supreme leader just might forsake his historic mission—the quest for nuclear weapons begun under Khomeini and carried forth at great cost by Khamenei and every single Iranian president—because the United States, "the epicenter of evil," has rallied the West against the Islamic Republic. The reasons administration officials give for why this extraordinary tergiversation will take place vary, but most spin around the idea that the supreme leader and his Revolutionary Guards—who oversee the nuclear program, terrorist operations, and domestic riot-control—really aren't sufficiently committed to developing a nuclear weapon that the forces of moderation can't seduce them from this dangerous course. The alleged forces of moderation are, in order of importance, newly elected president Hassan Rouhani, foreign minister Mohammad Zarif, and the Iranian people, at least those who voted for Rouhani.

Those who make these arguments, inside the U.S. government and out, rarely cite any primary material. Yet there is much to ponder in the lengthy speeches of Khamenei and senior guard commanders who scorch America and the West with nearly every breath; in the nuclear memoirs of Rouhani, which reveals a proud revolutionary determined to keep and advance the nuclear program despite European pressure (and, a decade ago, a widespread fear of George W. Bush); and in the recently published memoirs of Zarif, which limn a deeply conservative man wedded to the Islamic Revolution. In an odd twist on Iran's controlled democracy, administration officials can tell you that since Rouhani received a mandate for change, and since he has promised to get rid of the hated sanctions, then *ipso facto* he must be prepared to do the thing necessary to achieve that end: Rouhani, they conclude, intends to roll back Iran's nuclear aspirations.

Rouhani, they believe, must be more or less a moderate—a talented, politically savvy insider, not an egghead reformer like the former president Mohammad Khatami,

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whom Khamenei and his minions sliced and diced. He is, after all, not Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the uncouth, pietistic populist. He has a Ph.D. from a Scottish university (think Duns Scotus, David Hume, Adam Smith, Robert Burns, and Gordon Brown).

This is such a nonsensical take on Iran's deeply religious and ruthless power politics, and Rouhani's personal voyage through the Islamic Revolution, that it's hard to know where to start deconstructing the fiction and illogic. Suffice it to say that Khamenei has spent considerable energy the last four years destroying the threat of democracy inside his country. He has so elevated the Revolutionary Guards that their power rivals his own. He has given no indication that he now quakes before the very people he's squashed. Neither, by the way, does Rouhani, who raised not a finger in protest when Khamenei gutted the pro-democracy Green Movement in 2009 and playfully eviscerated Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the former clerical powerhouse, the true father of the regime's nuclear-weapons program, and Rouhani's primary mentor.

The Islamic Republic's president, moreover, has given no indication that he isn't still using the same playbook that he deployed against the European Union and the United States in 2003, when many in Tehran seriously feared that President Bush might eliminate one more member of the axis of evil. The six-month nuclear deal struck on November 24—supposedly the prelude to a more definitive pact—compromises nothing that cannot be easily reversed. Rouhani appears to be aiming again to gain time and money to advance the nuclear program—especially its hidden parts, which probably need more experimentation and cash. In 2003, his priority was centrifuge design and manufacturing, heavy-water reactor research, and a more deeply buried, bomb-resistant enrichment facility (Fordow). In 2013, it's probably ballistic-missile weaponization, advanced-centrifuge manufacturing, and smaller, more-difficult-to-detect cascade sites, where a thousand advanced centrifuges could take the regime quietly beyond an undetectable breakout capacity.

It's a perverse twist in the administration's agreement to provide limited sanctions relief to Tehran in exchange for a six-month partial pause: Hard currency frozen by sanctions in overseas bank accounts will soon be transferred back to Tehran, where it can be used freely by the regime to support nuclear research, dual-use imports, ballistic missile development, and clandestine centrifuge manufacturing. As of now, all of Iran's centrifuges are manufactured at unknown, unmonitored sites; no access has so far been granted to the engineering personnel who could guarantee that the West knows the number and locations of all centrifuge production facilities and determine how the regime has avoided the West's elaborate net to catch nuclear dual-use imports.

One would have thought this belonged in the first stage of any Geneva deal, since it will take months, probably years, to determine whether the regime is doing with centrifuge manufacturing what it has continuously done with the entire nuclear program since the 1980s: lie. One must assume that Khamenei is going to use the West's hard-currency relief, too, to support Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, easily Tehran's most important and expensive military adventure, and the Lebanese Hezbollah, the always-faithful Arab child of a very Persian Islamic Revolution. Yet the Brookings Institution scholar Ken Pollack, who has sometimes been sharply at odds with the administration on the Middle East, has called criticism of the Geneva deal "specious or tautological, or [afflicted by] … the kind of tenuous conspiracy thinking that we disparage when it comes from the Iranians."

But a basic understanding of international trade, a bit of common sense, and a quick glance at how the administration has conducted foreign policy in the region might make one skeptical about President Obama's achievement in Switzerland. Every billion in hard currency counts, especially abroad, where Iran's accessible hard-currency reserves are only around $20 billion. Even the administration's dubious figure for sanctions relief—$7 billion over six months—is a lot of money for the Islamic Republic, which has probably burned up several billion dollars in Syria since Damascus's savage dictatorship almost cratered last year. If that $7 billon figure is low, then the aid that President Obama has now given the mullahs is far from paltry. Anyone who has tracked how the administration calculated its gold-trading offer to the Iranians at the nuclear negotiations in Almaty in February and April 2013 (Turkish customs data clearly show that Iran pocketed $6 billion in a U.S. sanctions loophole; the administration claims it gave away nothing to Tehran) cannot be sanguine that the White House has any firm idea of how international commercial markets operate. Rouhani's post-Geneva bragging about "breaking" the West's sanctions regime is probably premature. But given his plausible assertion in his memoir that it was he who cleverly protected Iran's nuclear program in 2003, one might want to give the cleric a bit more time before damning him as "specious."

At the core of Washington's debate about Iran's nuclear program is a confluence of naïveté and fear of another war in the Middle East. The latter reinforces the former and bends the analysis of Iran's internal politics. It makes America's foreign policy elite, which has never been a particularly God-fearing crowd, even more blind to the role of religion in Iran's politics. The president himself appears to believe passionately that an irenic American foreign policy insulates the United States from Muslim anger and terrorism. Yet who knows for sure whether Barack Obama has

the will to preempt Tehran's nuclear program militarily? If Khamenei got caught enriching uranium to bomb-grade or kicked IAEA inspectors out of the country, the president might strike. Even the president's omnipresent desire to pivot the United States away from any region of conflict might not be enough to stop him from launching preemptive raids against the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites. The closer we get to an Iranian breakout capacity, the more serious Washington's deliberations on the ramifications of an Iranian nuke become. The most deadly and probably the most powerful man in uniform is Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Quds Force, the paramilitary and terrorist expeditionary unit within the Revolutionary Guard Corps, who unquestionably authorized the plan to bomb the Saudi ambassador in a Georgetown restaurant in 2011. Imagining Suleimani with atomic weapons is appreciably more disturbing than imagining Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, or Kim Jong-un with a nuke.

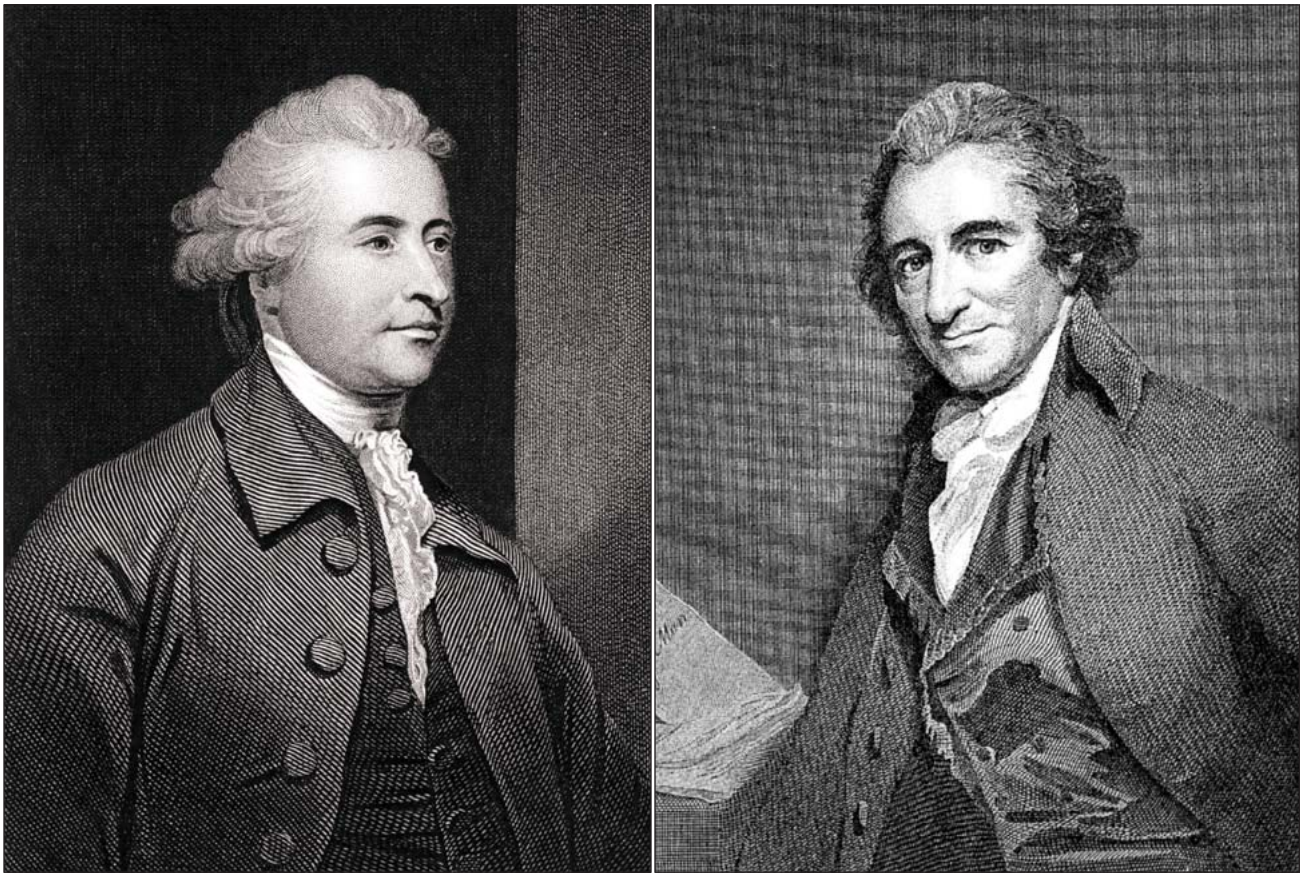
No one in the Middle East, however, believes that Obama would strike. Iran's Revolutionary Guards in particular revel in mocking the president's occasional "all-options-are-on-the-table" rhetoric. The left-wing base of the Democratic party certainly doesn't think the president will lead America into another war. Mention Obama's pledge to take out Tehran's nuclear sites to the nonproliferation soldiers at the Ploughshares Fund and they yawn or snicker. The only man in Washington who may still seriously believe that Obama retains the requisite bellicosity after his red-line debacle in Syria is Dennis Ross, the president's former Middle Eastern adviser and über Israeli-Palestinian peace-processor, whose capacity for perseverance and faith in the darkest circumstances is unparalleled.

Much of Washington's foreign-policy establishment, especially that residing in influential left-of-center think tanks, long ago conceded the bomb to Iran. Pollack's new book, *Unthinkable: Iran, the Bomb, and American Strategy*, advances an argument for containment, a position he has held for years. For those who want to default to containment, any diplomatic path will take them there. It doesn't really matter whether Geneva is a good deal or bad one; the only thing that matters is that we not bomb Iran's nuclear sites. And for most on the left—who unlike Pollack don't envision any need for a militarily strong and aggressive United States pushing back against Iranian adventurism—containment has become a synonym for patient, peaceful engagement and American withdrawal. (The crippling weakness of Pollack's grand strategy is that it presupposes tough Democrats and Republicans guiding American foreign policy; but the toughness necessary for containment is no less than that required for preemption.)

President Obama's heart and mind are, in all probability, in the same orbit as those of the nonproliferation crowd, who really liked nuclear nonproliferation so long as the United States was disarming and Washington didn't have to go to war to stop a third-world country from going nuclear. The president's post-Geneva stop-the-"endless cycle of violence" speeches certainly make one think that Obama will fold when Khamenei's men have made it crystal clear that nuclear rollback isn't an option. Ramping up sanctions globally—recapturing the momentum that Congress and the European Union had built by ever-escalating sanctions—will likely prove much more difficult than the White House now thinks. The all-important psychology of escalating sanctions, and the increasing American willpower that produced them, will soon be replaced by a spirit of compromise and, among foreign businesses, greed and a new resolve to test the administration's willingness to punish companies, especially European and Chinese firms, that violate U.S. sanctions.

European unity on Iran has always been in part a function of fear of American and Israeli preemptive military action. Fear of Israel has dissipated in Europe. In Paris, London, and Berlin, few now have much regard for—let alone fear of—President Obama. In the White House, transatlantic relations have become an afterthought, as French foreign minister Laurent Fabius made furiously clear during the first round in Geneva. And without crippling sanctions, Washington will have no real leverage left over the Iranian regime. President Obama's eagerness to avoid an unpleasant binary choice—surrender publicly to Tehran's nuclear *fait accompli* or preempt militarily—will have led him to a situation where he confronts the same choice, but with Iran's hand stronger and America's weaker. Khamenei will have called Obama's bluff—and will have billions more in his bank account. In all probability, the president has bought into a process of diminishing returns that he cannot abandon for fear of the cruel binary choice. For that matter, he may already have decided that the left wing of the Democratic party is right: Better Khamenei and Suleimani with a nuke than America in conflict. The odds are, he has.

In about six months' time, Khamenei's "step-by-step" counsel to his most loyal followers may well prove prescient. His loyal servant Rouhani, who jumped off Rafsanjani's sinking ship in 2005 for a stronger alliance with the supreme leader, will have again proven that Western-educated Iranians with decent English can do wonders with Americans. Jen Psaki, the State Department spokeswoman, when asked about Khamenei's November 20 speech at Khomeini's Grand Mosque, remarked that "comments like these are not helpful, but we still believe that both sides are negotiating in good faith." More than she probably knew, Ms. Psaki was right. ♦



Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine

The French Connection

How the Revolution, and two thinkers, bequeathed us 'right' and 'left.'

BY GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

Hard cases, it is said, make bad law. So, too, extreme situations make bad policy and worse philosophy. The French Revolution was just such a situation; compared with the French, the English and American revolutions are almost unworthy of the title of revolution. No one took the measure of the extremity of that revolution better than its contemporaries Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine. And nobody drew the most far-reaching, antithetical, and enduring political and philosophical lessons from that revolution.

The Great Debate
Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and the Birth of Right and Left
by Yuval Levin
Basic Books, 296 pp., $27.99

"The Great Debate" between Burke and Paine, Yuval Levin demonstrates, has persisted to this day in the form of the great divide between right and left. Levin is uniquely qualified to deal with both the political and philosophical aspects of that debate, then and now. As a writer, editor, and former policy staffer in the White House (where he dealt with such "wonkish" issues, he explains, as health care, entitlements, and the budget), he is himself a combatant in that debate. He is also a credentialed political philosopher, having earned his doctorate from the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. It is a formidable task Levin has set himself: to appreciate not only the exigencies and complexities of that historic moment (sometimes obscured by the passionate rhetoric of the protagonists), but also the underlying philosophical assumptions that drove the debate and continue to inspire it today.

Gertrude Himmelfarb is the author, most recently, of The People of the Book: Philosemitism in England from Cromwell to Churchill.

BURKE: UIG / GETTY IMAGES

Edmund Burke does not make that task easy. On the contrary, he almost defies it. He made no secret of his contempt for "metaphysicians." "I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions," he wrote in his defense of the American Revolution. "I hate the very sound of them." Twenty years later, the French revolutionaries provoked him even more: "Nothing can be conceived more hard than the heart of a thoroughbred metaphysician. It comes nearer to the cold malignity of a wicked spirit than to the frailty and passion of a man."

Nor was it only philosophy in the formal "metaphysical" sense that he derided. On one occasion after another, he expressed his distrust of "principles" and "abstractions." "History is a preceptor of prudence, not of principles," he declared.

> Circumstances (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind.

The issue is complicated by the charge leveled against Burke, in his time and since, that he was inconsistent, most notably in his support of the American Revolution and condemnation of the French Revolution. Burke anticipated such criticism when he described himself, in the concluding words of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, as "one who would preserve consistency by varying his means to secure the unity of his end." That did not satisfy Thomas Jefferson, who, upon reading the *Reflections*, remarked that "the Revolution in France does not astonish me so much as the revolution in Mr. Burke." Nor did it satisfy Thomas Paine, who opened the preface to *Rights of Man* by explaining that he had thought of Burke, the defender of the American Revolution, as "a friend to mankind," and, as their acquaintance had been founded on that ground, he would have found it "more agreeable . . . to continue in that opinion, than to change it."

And then there is the temptation to reduce this debate of ideas to a clash of personal and class interests: Burke the defender of the status quo, Paine the inveterate dissident and rebel. Burke, born into a respectable Irish family, well-bred and well-educated, quickly gained entrée into the intellectual and political elite of London, and thus to the seat in Parliament that made him a commanding presence in the country. One might well suppose that his motives were less than disinterested, that he had compelling personal reasons to oppose the French Revolution. The assault on the French establishment—the monarchy, aristocracy, and church—was, after all, an invitation to a similar assault on the established institutions in Britain, in which Burke had a vested interest, so to speak.

So, too, Paine seemed fated to be the defender of the principle as well as the fact of revolution. His poor English family provided him with the most minimal formal education, obliging him to seek a livelihood in one trade or another, in one town or another. When he found a position as an itinerant excise officer, he was fired for agitating for better pay and conditions for his fellow workers. With his personal life in shambles (his first wife died in childbirth, his second left him because of poverty), he sought refuge in America. By then self-educated and powerfully self-motivated, he became a passionate voice, first for the American revolutionaries against a foreign tyrant, and then for the French against their native oppressors.

Biographers may have no trouble casting Burke and Paine in their respective roles. But their debate over the French Revolution has a life of its own, which is why it continues to resonate today, more than two centuries after that momentous event. Levin confronts the full challenge of this debate by probing the principles and philosophies, sometimes explicit, more often implicit, that animate it, making it as vital today as it was then.

In Paine's case, the philosophy is all too evident. The title of his book, *Rights of Man*, is revealing enough. Levin explains that he follows the custom of the time in using "man" to refer to human beings in general. But perhaps more significant than the gender is the singularity of that word: man in his essential nature, rather than men in their variety or collectivity. That nature, Paine insists, means going "the whole way" back, not merely to antiquity or history, as Burke would have it, but to the "origin of man" and thus the "origin of his rights," the "unity of man" and thus his "natural right."

> Every history of the creation . . . agree[s] in establishing one point, the unity of man; by which I mean that men are all of one degree, and consequently that all men are born equal, and with equal natural right, in the same manner as if posterity had been continued by creation instead of generation. . . . Consequently every child born into the world must be considered as deriving its existence from God. The world is as new to him as it was to the first that existed, and his natural right in it is of the same kind.

Paine cannot leave it at that, however. There is, after all, history to contend with, which brought with it, as John Locke had demonstrated, society and government. Paine relates society more closely to nature than Locke did, giving it a vitality and authority that permit society to survive even after a revolution dissolves the government. Government is legitimate, Paine argues, to the extent that it is in accord with the nature of man, representing the choice and interests of the governed, the "distinct, unconnected individuals" who make up the nation. Monarchies and aristocracies are properly subject to revolution because they are morally as well as politically illegitimate. Indeed, revolution has a positive effect, allowing society to "regenerate itself," going "back to Nature for information," permitting us "to see government begin as if we lived at the beginning of time."

Paine is his own best commentator; his philosophical principles are simple, absolute, and unambiguous. The case for Burke is more complicated, not because of his protestations against philosophy as such, but because his philosophy is itself so complicated. Again, titles are revealing. "Reflections" suggests a tentativeness, an open-mindedness, even a modesty that is belied by the rhetoric as much as the substance of the book. But

the word does express the complexities and subtleties that, as much as the ideas themselves, stand in such sharp contrast to Paine.

Burke does not deny the idea of the nature of man. He only claims—it is a very large "only"—that we cannot understand that nature by reason alone, because man is not only a rational animal, he is also a creature of sympathies, sentiments, and passions. Nor can man be understood on his own, because he is, and always has been, a "civil social man," the product of "civil society." Nor can society be understood in terms of its origin, because, like government, it is always evolving.

Indeed, in the beginning, society was sometimes cruel, just as government was often tyrannical. It is history, not nature or reason, that matured and civilized primitive society, just as it mellows and legitimizes governments that may have been illegal and violent in their inception. Thus, the French Revolution has exactly the opposite effect of that attributed to it by Paine. So far from being regenerative, it is regressive, a descent into the barbarism that time and successive generations had meliorated.

And so it goes, Burke qualifying, complicating, and finally refuting Paine's primal, absolute verities: liberty, yes, Burke agrees, but the "civil liberty" that is subject to the constraints society necessarily imposes upon the individual's passions and desires. And yes, equality, but the "moral equality" inherent in every person, which does not entail either social or political equality and, indeed, may be violated by the attempt to realize those other modes of equality. Reason, but informed by wisdom, which draws not upon the "private stock of reason" of individuals, but upon the "bank and capital of nations and ages." Government with the consent of the governed, as reflected not in the choice of the people at any one time, but in the institutions and "prescriptions" developed over the course of time. And change, to be sure, but by way of gradual, peaceful, incremental reforms, not by a revolution that abolishes old reforms and subverts the very temper of reform.

Almost as an aside, Burke introduces a still more provocative note into the debate. Even some of his admirers (at the time and since) have been embarrassed by his paean to Marie Antoinette, who had been abused by the mob that stormed Versailles. Paine responded with one of his most memorable lines: "He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird." But it is more than the queen Burke eulogizes and Paine reviles. It is the idea of chivalry that Burke associates with her that he sees as the true victim of the revolution. "The age of chivalry is gone," he bemoans.

> It was this [chivalry] which, without confounding ranks, had produced a noble equality, and handed it down through all the gradations of social life. It was this opinion which mitigated kings into companions, and raised private men to be fellows with kings. Without force, or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power; it obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and gave a domination, vanquisher of laws, to be subdued by manners.
>
> But now all is to be changed. All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked, shivery nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own imagination, are to be exploded as ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion.

The passage is worth quoting at length because it is too often dismissed, as Burke had anticipated, as a rhetorical extravaganza—"ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated." But it is an essential part of his discourse on the relation of manners and sentiments to laws and institutions, of "public affections" to public order. Indeed, it is at the heart of his indictment of the French Revolution, which he regarded as not merely a political revolution, like the American one, but a cultural revolution—a revolution against civilization itself. A political revolution, the overthrow of one regime for another, might be partial, even transient. A cultural revolution is total and irrevocable, affecting every aspect of the individual and society as well as politics and government.

In the preface to *The Great Debate*, Levin, referring to his own engagement in contemporary political issues, identifies himself as a conservative. Perhaps it is a tribute to the elevated mode of political philosophy in which he was trained that his treatment of Paine is so serious and respectful. Burke may have the better of the debate, for Levin himself and for the reader of his book, but one comes to this conclusion only by seeing both protagonists at their best, as genuine philosophical alternatives.

It is in this nondogmatic, nonpolemical spirit that Levin poses the debate not, as one might expect, as between conservatives and liberals, but between right and left, the polar sides of the same political spectrum—of liberalism itself. By the book's conclusion, the debate is sufficiently muted so that philosophies become "dispositions" (a term Burke himself would have preferred). And dispositions, moreover, "within liberalism," because, in this post-Enlightenment world, we live in a "liberal age."

> These two possibilities suggest two rather different sorts of liberal politics: a politics of vigorous progress toward an ideal goal or a politics of preservation and perfection of a precious inheritance. They suggest, in other words, a progressive liberalism and a conservative liberalism.

Yet the dispositions do reflect philosophies. "Philosophy," Levin concludes, "moves history, especially in times of profound social change. And ours, like Burke and Paine's, is surely such a time." By the same token, one might say, history moves philosophy. Here Levin enters into another great debate that riles academia: between historians insisting upon the unique-

ness and specificity of events, which defy abstractions and generalizations, and philosophers impatient with the ephemera and contingency of events, which do not rise to the level of truth and certainty. Here too he rises to the occasion, satisfying the scruples of historians and philosophers alike. From a debate raged about an event centuries ago, he deduces truths that illuminate some of our most vexing political and social problems today. ♦

B&A

'The Israeli Epic'

A story of seven paratroopers in the Six-Day War.

BY ELIOT A. COHEN

Israeli troops at the Lion's Gate, Jerusalem (1967)

Like Dreamers
The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation
by Yossi Klein Halevi
Harper, 608 pp., $35

Usually one disregards the puffs on dust jackets written by the author's friends, who have often neglected to read the book in question. In the case of *Like Dreamers*, however, one of the blurb writers, former Israeli ambassador (and very fine historian) Michael Oren, has it right: "Yossi Klein Halevi has written the Israeli epic."

An epic is a heroic tale, written in an elevated style, that covers an extended struggle and, very often, a journey. Halevi's heroes, or at least his subjects, are seven Israeli paratroopers who fought to liberate the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967. Some were in the thick of the fight; others were wounded as they crossed the line of departure; and some never saw much combat at all. They took very different paths in life, ranging from zealous settlement on the West Bank to treason. Some were atheists and others profound believers. Some were staunch Marxists, others became right-wing politicians. Some were dreamers, aesthetes, and near- (not quite) pacifists; some were hardheaded pragmatists. Halevi, an American immigrant of longstanding to Israel, has the great gift of empathy as he carries their individual stories from the years just before the Six-Day War to the present.

Along the way, he chronicles real wars—June 1967, the Yom Kippur War, the 1982 Lebanon war—and the politics of an Israel whose factions are almost as fierce toward one another as they are toward the country's Arab enemies. It is a measure of Halevi's gifts as a writer that he can narrate combat, political intrigue, and the prosaic challenges of making a living in the Tel Aviv art scene with equal skill.

Like Dreamers is a tale of two elites: the largely secular kibbutzniks and the modern Orthodox religious nationalists. As Halevi admits, his story therefore leaves out large swaths of the Israeli public, such as the Sephardic population that Menachem Begin tapped to build a new majority and new politics in Israel from the 1970s on, and the mass of refugees from Germany and Eastern Europe who arrived in the years just before and just after World War II and who were, to some extent, comparably sidelined in favor of the old socialist elites of the first decades of the 20th century and the native-born sabras thereafter.

But Halevi's choice is not arbitrary. In the 1960s, kibbutzniks, though amounting to only a small percentage of the population, dominated the elite ranks of the Israel Defense Forces, including the paratroops. They represented, in large measure, the leftist (sometimes very leftist) idealism of the founding generation. The modern religious, usually identified by their knitted skullcaps, have assumed a similar role. They now are overrepresented almost as much as the kibbutzniks once were, and for similar reasons: They are willing to volunteer for the most dangerous and demanding assignments.

Halevi's account follows not only the paratroopers but other political and military figures—Ariel Sharon, Yitzhak Rabin, and, perhaps most interestingly, Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook, a pivotal figure in modern religious Zionism. Halevi focuses most of his attention, however, on two paratroopers. One is Arik Achmon, a mulishly independent secularist who leaves his kibbutz and becomes a

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businessman and entrepreneur; he is a relentless rationalist, a patriot, and a doer. The other is Yoel Bin-Nun, one of the founders of the Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) movement that pioneered the settlement of the West Bank, beginning with the Gush Etzion bloc outside Jerusalem, which had been overrun by Palestinian irregulars and the Jordanian Army during Israel's War of Independence. He, too, in a different way, breaks with his own world of settler politics.

Achmon and Bin-Nun are Halevi's epic subjects, each with his faults and blindness, but ultimately with qualities of character—including self-sacrifice and compassion—that make them heroic in the author's eyes and in our own. Each, in different ways, strives to accommodate fellow citizens and soldiers across the secular/religious divide. Each achieves positions of eminence and leadership only to be, in different ways, betrayed by subordinates and associates. Each is a man of integrity, whole in spirit, and just.

The Six-Day War helped consolidate, at home and abroad, a superficial, sometimes cartoonish, heroic image of Israel and its armed forces. It was a war of necessity, to be sure; but, like any war, it was filled with episodes of incompetence, cowardice, and horror. Halevi recounts the intelligence blunders and tactical errors that cost many of the paratroopers' comrades their limbs, their eyesight, or their lives. Some of them saw, in the recovery of the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, the fulfillment of a divine promise; others, more soberly, saw the costly accomplishment of a necessary military task.

Halevi does not conceal from readers the underside of Israeli military and political life—and both can be nasty indeed. This is a world that includes assassins and totalitarians, as well as the normal array of cheats, liars, dupes, and demagogues. But it is a measure of Halevi's genius as an author that he can depict these realities without losing sight of the extraordinary nature of the Israeli accomplishment: the construction, with all its faults, of a liberal democratic state, a tolerant and humane Jewish homeland—all from the most unlikely collection of refugees and victims in the face of enmity and violence.

The Israel of 2013 remains endangered, but it also flourishes, economically and more profoundly as well. It has one of the highest birth rates in the modern world, and fecundity is, for a wealthy country (as Israel must now be counted), a measure of a population's commitment to its own future. That it has navigated the perils of external enemies and internal conflict so well is a testament to its Arik Achmons and Yoel Bin-Nuns. To know Israel's real strength, and to learn something of heroic achievement, one can do no better than to read this remarkable book. ♦

B&A

Henry's Legacies

One family, two generations, and modern England.

BY J.J. SCARISBRICK

It was brave to embark on this book: so vast is the literature on the period and familiar its highlights. But Peter Ackroyd is energetic and gifted enough to have mastered his sources and produced a sparklingly fresh account of Tudor England. No doubt, the professionals will find plenty to complain about here; but most of them will secretly wish that they had been able to write it.

Yes, the gory bits get the full treatment: the brutal executions (especially of two of Henry VIII's hapless wives and the Jesuit Edmund Campion); the horrendous burnings; the risings of 1536 and the rash of rebellions from Cornwall to Norfolk in 1549; the careers of the two thuggish Seymour brothers who tried to take advantage of the minority of Henry's son Edward and gain control of the land; the impudent plot by Robert Dudley to put his daughter-in-law on the throne when the sickly Edward died.

Elizabeth's *amours* and the plots against her receive the attention they need, as do the stories (which are particularly well told) of that most fatal of *femmes fatales*, Mary, Queen of Scots, and of the dashing, vainglorious young Earl of Essex, who, in a bid to break the Cecil family's grip on the Elizabethan political scene, tried to kidnap as well as woo the aging Elizabeth.

Ackroyd has a wonderful eye for the telling detail, cameos that stick in the mind. I will limit myself to three examples: Henry in his last years, bloated and stinking, being hoisted up stairs by ropes and pulleys; Elizabeth lending a handkerchief to her French suitor, the Duke of Anjou, when he wept on being told that he was not to

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Tudors
The History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I
by Peter Ackroyd
Thomas Dunn, 528 pp., $29.99

The Lady Elizabeth, ca. 1546

be the lucky man; the same Elizabeth sporting the first-ever wristwatch. These are the little touches that make the past come alive.

Ackroyd also tries hard to master the complexities of the Tudor religious scene and to be fair to all sides, even "Bloody" Mary Tudor. But he could say more about the positive qualities of her brief restoration of the old faith, and is not surefooted when tracing the remarkable revival of English Catholicism in the last decades of Elizabeth's reign. (Incidentally, he should not say that Roman Catholics believe that the Eucharistic presence is a physical one and that in the Mass the sacrifice of Calvary "is repeated or reproduced." Catholic teaching is that the presence is *real* but not *physical* and that the Mass is a making present *now* of Christ's unrepeatable self-offering. And why does he continually refer to Convocation, the clerical "parliament"—in fact there were two of them, one for the South and one for the North—as "a convocation"?)

The final chapter claims that the great theme of the book is the story of a reformation of the English church that came wholly from "above" and owed little to continental Protestantism. This may be largely true of what occured during Henry VIII's reign. But the Elizabethan Settlement, for all its fudging, was a Protestant one. Its leading divines were inspired primarily by Calvin and saw the English church as part of the pan-Protestant movement. Ackroyd calls that church "Anglican," which is highly questionable, especially as he previously stated that Anglicanism "did not really ever exist before [Richard] Hooker"—i.e., not until the 1590s—which is much nearer the truth. Anglicanism was a sort of English "Counter-Reformation."

It is true that the Reformation gave us an English Bible and the sonorities of Thomas Cranmer. But I think Ackroyd could have said more about the losses: hundreds of often magnificent buildings torn down; countless statues, stained glass windows, chalices, pyxes, and paxes smashed; thousands of rich vestments stripped of their gold and silver thread and jewels; organs and rich libraries gutted, and so on. This was mass vandalism, a cultural disaster.

I also think he underestimates the fragility of the Tudor regime. If, as seems likely, Henry's grandfather Edward IV was illegitimate—and was known by many contemporaries to be—his daughter, whom the first Tudor king married, did little to strengthen the dynasty's position. The threat may have diminished as the years went by, but Henry VII's son was still very vulnerable. Reginald Pole, eventually a cardinal and archbishop of Canterbury, had a better claim to the throne than did Edward VI. Had Pole come back to England to lead the great rising of 1536, as he nearly did, or had he married Mary Tudor, as some urged—what might have happened?

As for Henry's daughter Elizabeth, we can never expect to shed all the "Good Queen Bess" and Gloriana mythology: It means too much to England's self-image, and to Hollywood. But we can try.

Ackroyd does pretty well. His Elizabeth is a remarkable woman, but more than a bit cantankerous and mean. He could add that, since she never ventured further north than Kenilworth in the Midlands, and never visited East Anglia, let alone Wales or the southwest, the majority of her subjects never saw her. She spent much of her time on progress at a few miles' radius around London, enjoying the increasingly reluctant hospitality of some of her wealthier subjects, and probably patronized her dressmakers more than the arts and learning. The famous Elizabethan sea dogs, like Drake and Hawkins, were little more than pirates.

If we take away the things that happened to her, that is, that were not of her making—the plots, the unwelcome arrival in England of the fugitive Mary Queen of Scots, the Spanish Armada, and so on—there is not much to show for her reign, not much positive achievement initiated by her or her ministers. And, of course, we must always remember that Shakespeare did not belong to the Elizabethan establishment. He was likely a serious Catholic in his younger days, and he remained an outsider to the end.

But none of that detracts from the fact that, if you want a finely written, racy account of the monster Henry VIII and his brood, a history book that really fires your imagination and is often so exciting that you cannot put it down, you should get this book. ♦

B&A

Algerian Dilemma

Reflections from Camus in his centennial year.

BY ROGER KAPLAN

Algerian Chronicles
by Albert Camus
translated by Arthur Goldhammer
edited by Alice Kaplan
Belknap, 240 pp., $21.95

World War II posed no moral or existential problems for Albert Camus. As it began, he was 26 years old and had already made his mark as a crusading journalist; within a couple of years he would be famous for a shocking novel, *The Stranger*. With his family and his wife's family in relative security in Algeria, he left the Paris paper where he was working when it fired its Jewish staff and entered, as the idiom had it, into resistance. Camus became one of the editors of *Combat*, one of the most widely circulated clandestine newspapers, and lived for a time in the Resistance stronghold of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon.

Roger Kaplan is a writer in Washington.

Camus sensed, and expressed starkly, what many of his contemporaries felt with vague premonitions and discomfort: The world does not care whether you get out of bed on the wrong foot, or have no running water, or are condemned to death because of your ancestry (or present beliefs). What follows is that you have a choice: You can succumb to the horror and become a vegetable or an opportunist, a person with no moral compass; or you can use your reason and senses to think things through and find what is right, and live accordingly.

This applies to the political life, life in society, and the aesthetic life, wherein you learn to appreciate the beauty, both natural and artificial, of which the world is full. Such a life, even hesitatingly approached by the ill- or incompletely educated characters who sometimes appear in Camus's writings, transcends the absurdity of it all—at least insofar as can be done by mere mortals.

This Camus-in-a-nutshell hardly does justice to France's 1957 Nobel laureate in literature. But full justice, as he surely knew, is scarcely within anyone's grasp; the striving for it gives life meaning. Albert Camus (1913-1960) sought justice throughout his life, and nowhere as insistently as in his native Algeria.

Curiously enough, his papers on the continuing Algerian crisis, which cover 20 years, have never before been published in English. This present edition is a translation, with some minor editorial notes and a helpful introduction, of the third volume of the selections he made of his journalistic writings, *Actuelles* (*Current Events*), in 1958. It is devoted entirely to Algeria and collects the pieces he considered most helpful for finding a just solution to a situation that, at the time, seemed utterly blocked.

Camus's anticolonialist credentials were solid. They were well in advance of the French left—which, in fact, supported colonialism almost to the bitter end—and of the Third Worldist fashion that evolved as a kind of replacement faith to orthodox socialism in the late 1950s. Camus was no romantic and did not expect salvation for the Algerian people, or any other ex-oppressed non-Europeans. He only hoped that they would demonstrate more political lucidity than their ex-oppressors. He viewed this as their only chance to make the kind of country, and society, that they claimed to want.

Thus, in the anticolonial writings he contributed to the left-of-center *Alger républicain* in 1937-8—represented here by selections from a series of reports called "The Misery of Kabylia" (Kabylia being the mountainous Berber region to the east of Algiers) and in the alarm he tried to sound in *Combat* upon returning to Algeria in 1945, able to see the looming crisis—the theme is that France had betrayed its own values in Algeria.

Albert Camus

Camus took with utmost seriousness the principles of French republicanism, which were flouted with impunity in what was, administratively, supposed to be not a colony but three overseas *départements* of France. In reality, the Algerian Muslim majority was, except for a narrow fringe, deprived of its political and civil rights, and the economic consequences were of a level of misery that, Camus warned, approached mass starvation.

The unjust system in Algeria, however, was not to be blamed on the French settlers, the large majority of whom were, like Camus's own family, of extremely modest means. Camus insisted that the *Français d'Algérie* should not be made to carry the blame and pay the price for the failed policies of Third and Fourth Republic politicians eager to make advantageous political arrangements with the small, cliquish, settler upper class.

But that is exactly what happened. When, in 1954, the federation of nationalist parties known as the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) took command of the independence movement, thrusting its most ruthless elements into command and launching a terror and guerrilla campaign, the reaction in Paris was brutal: "The only negotiation is war," said François Mitterrand, then a young minister of justice (no doubt Camus appreciated the bitter irony). But as the FLN dug in, the center-left governments of the Fourth Republic began talking of negotiations that would, the settlers believed, lead to surrender.

Camus's writings, mainly in *L'Express*—a magazine founded to oppose a purely military solution to the crisis—took on a different cast. The theme of justice remained dominant. But now he called attention to the coming injustice he feared would be done to his people, even as he continued to focus on the injustices committed for a century-and-a-half, in the name of a civilizing mission, against the Arabs and Berbers.

Thus, *Algerian Chronicles* is one of the most dramatic volumes ever published in the genre of "selected news columns." For, in Camus's case, and particularly in the third *Actuelles*, what we have is not only real reporting and sensible policy recommendations, but the record of a soul in crisis.

It is not that Camus was ambivalent about what was happening in Algeria. He remained steadfast in his belief that nothing was possible unless and until republican principles were truly

KATHERINE MESSENGER

and universally applied. Indeed, he was perfectly willing, even eager, to consider such matters as reparations, well aware (as his reporting shows) of the economic spoliation to which the Muslim majority was subjected. What he could not accept, however, was the idea of turning over a country of many and diverse communities to a single-party Arab nationalist regime.

After 1957 and the publication of his selections the following year, Camus cloaked himself in his famous "silence" on Algeria. He explained that the words he wrote, words of moderation and measure, would be distorted and abused. Since he was a marked man on both sides—as an apologist for colonialism by left-wing, Stalinist fellow travelers like Sartre, and as a traitor to his own people by the *Algérie française*—he feared that his own family, including his mother still in Algeria, would be targeted. Thus, during the last years of the war in Algeria, when it became the dominant political issue in France, Camus stayed on the sidelines.

One can only conjecture, of course, but even had he stayed in the debate until his death in an automobile accident in 1960, Camus likely would not have had much influence. Which is, perhaps, the enduring lesson of this volume. Since the voice of restraint—what Camus liked to call the "Mediterranean voice"—cannot be heard in the midst of a savage war of peace, the greatest gift that a man of letters can offer is the example of courage: to stand on one's own ground and speak, even if it means going against the conformism of thought that will, in the end, prevail. ♦

B&A

Freudian Brush

A modern master's indelible style and disordered life.

BY HENRIK BERING

Lucian Freud (1922-2011) did not tolerate lateness, as Mick Jagger's onetime wife Jerry Hall found out the hard way back in 1997. For four months, she had been sitting for her portrait, in which she was breast-feeding her and Jagger's son. But being punctual was not among Ms. Hall's virtues, and after arriving late on a number of occasions, Freud abruptly canceled the project, informing his agent: "The painting's had a sex change. . . . Jerry didn't show up for two sittings, so I changed her into a man." Freud had simply painted out Jerry Hall's face and stuck the head of his assistant David Dawson on to her breast-feeding body. The somewhat unusual result was sold to another client.

This incident appears in Geordie Greig's vivid portrayal of Freud, which is based on a decade's worth of Saturday morning sessions at Clarke's Restaurant in London's Notting Hill. The author, now the editor of the *Mail on Sunday*, first got interested in Freud while a pupil at Eton and, having pursued the elusive artist for decades, finally gained access to the man he regards as "the greatest realist figurative painter of the 20th century."

Breakfast with Lucian
The Astounding Life and Outrageous Times of Britain's Great Modern Painter
by Geordie Greig
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 272 pp., $30

"He wasn't one for great self-analysis; he was almost animal," recalls Freud's bookie. Wisely, Greig himself goes easy on the analysis. Instead, he delivers his subject in the flesh. Freud was "an odd mix of vanity with a touch of the vagrant," writes Greig. Old catalogues show him, emanating raw power, dressed like a cross between a "pastry chef and a bare-knuckle fighter," with wrinkled shirt and scarf, checkered cook's pants, and storm trooper boots sans laces.

Beneath the rough exterior, though, Freud had a taste for the finer things in life, as evidenced by his Georgian house on Kensington Church Street, furnished in a style Greig characterizes as "Punk Georgian." Among the general untidiness, one could find bits of 18th-century furniture, elegant cutlery, and fine glasses. A visitor recalls Freud standing at his easel in his pajama bottoms, "a tin of Beluga caviar with a silver spoon in one hand, his paintbrush in the other," and a half-bottle of flat Salon champagne next to him. He had finely chiseled features and bright eyes that were constantly moving; his voice was pleasant and cultivated. He spoke with a very clear enunciation—"It was not so much German as just a preciseness," notes Neil MacGregor, former director of the London National Gallery—and he rolled his "r"s, to particular effect in the word "*corrrupt*."

Born in Berlin in 1922, Lucian Freud was the middle brother of three; their grandfather was the great Sigmund Freud. With the Nazi takeover of Germany, the family moved to Great Britain. Trouble began in Lucian's teenage years. He was expelled from boarding school, and his mindset may be gathered from these lines written while he was hospitalized with appendicitis: "When on a bunk bed you lie, with loathing in your yellow eyes swimming in sickly fat." His entry into art school had been a sculpture entitled *Three-legged Horse*—imperfectly equipped, one gathers, because the artist had run out of stone. Perhaps inevitably, his art school in East Anglia burned down, with the suspected cause a Freudian cigarette butt carelessly thrown away.

Until four years before his death, Freud's London studio was situated on Holland Park Road in Paddington, where, in the early days, he worked among swindlers, robbers, and bookies. At that time, he himself would

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spend the occasional night in a cell, locked up for fighting. (He carefully explained to Greig how to punch someone without breaking one's thumb.) Until Freud got rich, and gambling lost its thrill, he was addicted to betting on horses and dogs and playing the casinos; his studio door was reinforced with a quarter-inch steel plate to keep debt collectors out.

Freud's acquaintances were found at the extremes of society, among the shady types in Soho and the aristocracy: "I travel vertically, not horizontally," he said. At both ends, he found a rejection of the normal constraints of bourgeois society. Of his artist colleagues, Freud's closest friend was Francis Bacon, Freud's most successful portrait of whom Robert Hughes once characterized as "a grenade a fraction of a second before it explodes." When Bacon returned the favor, the results were less immediately recognizable—although this didn't prevent the typically smudged Bacon triptych of Freud from recently becoming the most expensive painting ever sold at auction ($142.4 million). The two frequented the Colony Room, a notorious watering hole on Soho's Dean Street, and though different in styles, both stayed clear of abstract and conceptual art. For a long time, Bacon was the successful one while Freud was written off as a "parochial sideshow," especially in America. When Freud started making money, Bacon became jealous and ended their friendship.

With his aura of menace and feral energy, Freud was irresistible to women. He was charming and well-read, could recite poetry by Goethe, Eliot, and Yeats, as well as naughty quatrains by the Earl of Rochester—whatever the occasion called for. And he moved well, "slid[ing] across the kitchen linoleum in his socks as if on skates." He was also a nifty dancer. One admirer, Lady Lucinda Lambton, described him as being "as magical as he was malign," with an evil streak like "a silver thread through a pound note. . . . I worshipped every inch of him while being terrified." Keeping track of all his mistresses can be complicated: At one point, he was even sleeping with his ex-wife's daughter. He fathered at least 14 acknowledged children, although 30-40 might be a truer estimate. He refused to have any of his offspring live with him, as this would interfere with his painting.

Lucian Freud in his studio (1954)

The one constant in this general chaos was his obsession with work. Starting out, he had used a linear style, inspired by the old German masters, and worked with tiny brushes. But prodded by critics, and by Bacon, he changed to broader brushes and looser strokes. Disliking bright colors, he favored a palette of grays and browns. He was also an extremely slow painter. When he was working on *Two Plants* (1977-80), a mistress and model notes, "he was working on it obsessively leaf by leaf, almost as if they were growing at the plants' own rate." Sitting for Freud tested the subject's endurance, as documented in Martin Gayford's account *Man with a Blue Scarf* (2010), and if Freud did not like the result, he would destroy it. In some cases, he had professional thieves snatch from galleries those of his works he considered substandard.

While he did not smudge the faces of sitters, as Bacon delighted in doing, Freud deliberately made his people ugly. When his friend Brigadier Andrew Parker Bowles, commander of the Household Cavalry, complained that his stomach appeared to be bursting through his open uniform jacket, Freud promptly added extra fat to it. His 2001 portrait of Queen Elizabeth was pronounced by one critic to rival Quentin Massys's *Grotesque Old Woman* (1525) for the title of "world's ugliest portrait."

For a man who did not want to be regarded as a "freak painter," Freud produced his share of human oddities, such as his nude portraits of the performance artist Leigh Bowery and a 300-pound female social services worker. Not to mention *Naked Man with Rat* (1977-78), the painting that first captured Greig's imagination as a schoolboy, in which the model's private parts loom larger than the rat. While readers are likely to be less enchanted by the painting than Greig appears to be, it is nice to know that, in order to quiet the rat, it was fed half a sleeping pill, crushed and dissolved in Veuve Clicquot and served in a dog bowl.

In keeping with the Romantic ideal of the soothsayer/madman/genius, Greig's admiration for Freud's work occasionally makes him appear to forgive some of the monstrous behavior that he documents so well. He also overstates Freud's originality: In contrast to many contemporaries, Freud could, indeed, paint—as proved by his portraits of David Hockney and Martin Gayford, and his superb renderings of dogs and horses. But in his cultivation of the aesthetically and morally offensive, he conformed entirely to the prevailing tastes of his day.

We might wish he had spent his talent on worthier subjects, but then he would not have been Lucian Freud. ♦

GETTY IMAGES

B&A

Plains Speaking

The desolation of lives, and landscapes to match.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Bruce Dern, Will Forte

Nebraska
Directed by Alexander Payne

How do you make a movie about depressing people that is not, in itself, depressing? That is the challenge that writer-director Alexander Payne sets for himself: He is the Houdini of depression, shackling himself in a narrative straitjacket of hopeless despair and then somehow magically getting himself and his audience out of it.

In his movies—*Citizen Ruth* (1996), *Election* (1999), *About Schmidt* (2002), *Sideways* (2004), and *The Descendants* (2011)—Payne focuses his gaze on the disappointed, the deluded, the lost, and the betrayed. These are movies about liars, thieves, drug addicts, fools, and fanatics, and they all behave pretty badly. And yet, in the end, Payne's sensibility is essentially comedic. These movies (all except *The Descendants*, which I thought was awful) succeed in pulling off the daring feat of being both compassionate and merciless towards their characters.

Nebraska, Payne's latest film, is nominally his bleakest. Shot in a grim black and white, it's the story of a taciturn old drunk named Woody (an unforgettable Bruce Dern) who believes the direct-mail letter he receives telling him he's won a million dollars. His sad-sack son David (Will Forte), who sells stereo equipment incompetently and can't hold onto a girlfriend, decides to drive him to collect the prize even though he knows it's a scam.

The movie it most resembles photographically is *The Last Picture Show* (1971), Peter Bogdanovich's brilliant black-and-white rendering of Larry McMurtry's novel about Texas teenagers in a dead-end town in the 1950s where the only source of entertainment, the local movie theater, is about to shut down. But while *The Last Picture Show* is a tragedy of sorts, *Nebraska* is a very, very, very dry comedy. Payne is entirely unsentimental about the Nebraskans who populate this movie and a few of his other films. They are often small-minded, provincial, and petty, and at times he seems as dismissive of their lives as Sinclair Lewis was of the lives of Babbitt and the other residents of Zenith. But unlike Lewis, who left his Minnesota hometown and then made fun of it for the rest of his life, Payne still lives part of the year in his native Omaha—and the movies also show that he likes his fellow Cornhuskers on account of their doggedness, their plainness, the way they get up and go about their business.

Woody and David take a road trip from Billings, the Montana town where they live, through Wyoming, past Mount Rushmore, and then finally into their home state of Nebraska, where the direct-mail marketing firm is located. We are in Depopulated America, where you can go hundreds of miles without seeing anyone—where even in the cities there's no traffic, and where the small farming towns froze in place 40 years ago and then began to decay.

Woody is a reflection of the landscape. Unyielding and distant, profoundly stubborn and almost entirely withdrawn, he is a puzzle to his son and a source of raging and abiding disappointment to his wife Kate (the delightful June Squibb). The miracle of Dern's performance and Bob Nelson's screenplay is that they sprinkle tiny bits of character detail throughout that slowly turn Woody from the movie's object to its subject. He's a difficult and foolish man, but we find out that he possesses both qualities for good reason—and that he is very far from being as emotionally absent as he appears.

Eventually, father and son end up in Woody's hometown, where there is a family reunion of sorts. But the family believes that Woody is going to get the million dollars, as do the rest of the folks in town. They are all full of congratulations that mask a lifetime of wants and needs and not-so-hidden resentments. Nobody in *Nebraska* has very much, and the possibility of getting just a little more turns them all a bit crazy.

As in *About Schmidt*, Payne's remarkable portrait of a man in his 60s who comes to see that his entire life has been a failure, the characters in *Nebraska* find a glimmer of hope in a few simple acts of kindness. Payne renders that glimmer as dryly as he renders the humor. *Nebraska* is a movie about depression, but it ends up being both heartbreaking and subtly revivifying. ♦

PARAMOUNT VANTAGE

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

an invigorating stroll on that brisk Geneva night.

When I returned, I was greeted immediately with a message from Foreign Minister Zarif: He was ready to deal. I knew then that these many months of dialogue had made clear the Obama administration's firm resolve to protect American national security at all costs (except for several costs that we weren't willing to realistically consider). When I sat down with Zarif that night, I asked him, point blank, "What do I need to do to put you in a nuclear-enrichment deal tonight?" I laid out my terms: a permanent freeze on all nuclear enrichment, a permanent freeze on the construction and installation of new centrifuges, and the cessation of aid to international terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah.

When he refused, I knew I had him right where I wanted him, so I countered: "Okay, Zarif, here's what I can do for you: a two-year freeze on all non-civilian enrichment activities, a temporary freeze on the installation and construction of centrifuges, and a reduction in Iran's support for international terrorism. Best I can do, I can't go any lower."

He stared straight at me and said nothing, didn't move a muscle, like a man who knew he had been bested. As a show of strength, I squirmed in my seat and refused to make eye contact. And, to maintain the upper hand, I countered my own counter-offer: "Okay, okay, final offer: a six-month freeze on some enrichment activities, a suspension of the installation of new centrifuges, and as for the international terrorism stuff, we can let bygones be bygones. Take it or leave it." My hand shook with confidence as I extended it across the table. "And eight billion dollars. Eight billion dollars, not a penny more."

He smiled, and thus gave away what little negotiating strength he had left. When he shook my hand, he squeezed too hard, as if to overcompensate for his failure to hold firm. Yes, his was the warm, dry hand of defeat, now in the grasp of my cool, sweaty palm of victory.

And though it has been nearly twenty years since that night, it remains the signature achievement of my career in public service. Of course at the time there were naysayers, those who said it couldn't be done, that it shouldn't be done, particularly the Israeli government. But I truly believe that Israel, if it still existed