

End or Beginning?

David Walsh

THE RECENT FLURRY OF INTEREST generated by Francis Fukuyama's article on the end of history has been a unique phenomenon. Rarely does the national press interest itself in the quasi-philosophic musings of a (by his own admission) obscure intellectual. It says something about the times we live in that such an interest has been aroused. Fukuyama's writings have been seized upon because of a sense that they are somehow strangely relevant to the sweeping changes now taking place within the Communist bloc.

This is certainly the case. The intellectual framework in which we have viewed the world for more than fifty years is no longer adequate. Our world-view was shaped by the conflict between ideological totalitarianism and liberal democracy. That struggle seemed irrevocable. If one form of totalitarianism was defeated (as in Fascism or Nazism), there was another to take its place (Communism in its multiple varieties). The conflict itself was the constant that endured. Freedom and democratic government on one side, repression and state terror on the other.

But now, without preparation or warning, all of this has changed. 1989 will go down as the watershed year in which the irreversible nature of the changes has become universally clear. Not only have we passed the point of no return in the political arrangements in the countries of Eastern Europe but, more importantly, the nature of Communism itself has undergone a profound transformation.

This is evident in a wide variety of ways. The widely touted economic and political reforms in the Soviet Union and elsewhere are only a symptom of the sea-change taking place. Communist states have always had the capacity to adapt to changing political conditions. And much of the skepticism of recent years has arisen from this well-founded

awareness. But what makes the present "reforms" different is that they are not merely tactical adjustments. They arise from an inner disintegration of the Communist movement itself. A profound loss of confidence in Communism has occurred and there seems to be no possibility of restoring it.

The events, accelerating toward a breathtaking culmination in the symbolic collapse of the Berlin Wall, have revealed the extent of the inner dissolution. Without firing a shot Eastern Europe has been liberated and the peoples of the Soviet Union are not far behind. The precipitous nature of these events has been their most astonishing feature. Admittedly, these were not popular regimes. But even without the backing of Soviet troops, the Communist parties of Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria possessed formidable power. Party members controlled all the key pressure points within the

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societies. Yet they gave up virtually without a struggle, with the exception of Romania (where the grip of ideology appeared to have retained its vitality a bit longer).

No, something utterly new has occurred. Communism has lost its stridency, its militance, its sense of a world mission. When Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union would no longer export revolution and went on to renounce such attempts in the past, it was clear that we were dealing with a new type of Soviet leadership. All of the evidence has continued to point toward the same conclusion. Indeed, one begins to wonder, not whether Gorbachev can survive, but whether the Communist Party of the Soviet Union can long have a future. The only basis for its claim to legitimacy is that there is no comparable organization capable of govern-

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ing that sprawling country. For it no longer stands for the "ideals" of Communist political or economic doctrine. The recent abandonment of the party monopoly within the Soviet Union has reverberated with a finality that few of us expected to observe.

What, then, does all of this signify? Has history come to an end now that the triumph of liberal democracy is complete? The prospect of an age of uninterrupted peace is surely tempting. And who deserves it more than the long-suffering denizens of the twentieth century? Yet we cannot quite overcome the feeling of unreality in the language about the end of history. There is something not quite right about it, even though we may not be able to put our finger on it. And this is more than the superficial objection that history cannot end because it is obvious that time continues. Fukuyama is correct that an end of political development in the qualitative sense does mean the end of history. So where is the problem?

Well, in the first place, we are bound to feel a little uneasy about the air of self-congratulation that hangs around this whole discussion. The collapse of Communism is not a triumph for liberalism in the sense of an effect achieved by the liberal democracies. It is only a triumph for liberalism by default, since its principal opponent has expired. Liberal democratic ideas may be on the ascendant in Communist countries, but this is no reflection on Western powers of persuasion or perseverance. For the Western states did nothing to positively bring this about. Indeed, they were as surprised by it as anyone and, if the truth were known, are a little uncomfortable about the gaping uncertainty the Communist collapse has generated. Anti-Communism was a clear and comfortable principle of public policy. Now what will provide us with a sense of direction?

THE SECOND DIFFICULTY with the "end-of-history" thesis is that the movements that have disappeared in this century, the ideological movements, are precisely the ones that proclaimed the end of history most emphatically. Surely this realization is enough to give us pause. Are we not prolonging the very phenomenon whose demise we are celebrating? Marx drew his inspiration from Hegel who was the most impressive exponent of the culmination of history within time. And it is just this apocalypticism that gave Marxism and the other ideological movements their fierce missionary intensity. What made them movements of such fanatical destructiveness was the messianic sense of mission. After all, everything is justified in the name of bringing about the perfection of human nature and society that constitutes the end of history.

The larger problem is the misunderstanding of the Communist collapse that arises from the long-standing

Western failure to understand the nature of the Communist movement. This confusion is illustrated by the current explanation that Communism has been rejected because it has failed as an economic system. The problem is that it has always failed as an economic system. What needs to be explained is how it managed to survive despite its manifest inadequacy. Without understanding this we cannot make sense of the precipitous nature of its disintegration.

What has to be recognized is that movements like Fascism, National Socialism, and Communism were never purely political movements. Their viability never really depended on their pragmatic political success or failure. They were always judged in light of a higher order, viz. the ultimate goal of a complete and perfect community in which the state would have "withered away." For want of a better

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term we call them quasi-religious movements, because they embody many of the elements of religious faith. Above all they are apocalyptic forms of faith. They live in expectation of the transfiguring apocalypse, the revolutionary transformation of human nature and society.

As with all forms of apocalyptic faith, the intensity cannot be sustained beyond a certain point. When the Parousia has not occurred, then the expectation begins to exhaust itself. The tension collapses and, like the early Church, the realization emerges that we must settle down to conditions as they are within this world. A process of adjustment inevitably occurs when the transfiguring intervention is no longer imminent. The difference between the early Church and Communism is that the Church had a spiritual core beyond the apocalyptic expectations, whereas Communism has very little to offer apart from the prophecy of a revolutionary perfection of all things. What has occurred is, not the realization of the economic failure of Communism, but the natural and inevitable exhaustion of a sense of waiting for an event that is perpetually postponed.

The third problem with the inclination to end history is the misunderstanding of what such an event would mean. Fukuyama has still not understood Hegel's most astute twentieth-century interpreter, Alexandre Kojève, the French Marxist who spent a good deal of time pondering this problem. Kojève's conclusion was that the end of history would mean the end of all that is distinctively human. If all of the great intellectual questions have been solved in principle (there remains only the routine of application), then there is no longer a need for inquiry and

discussion. Without the openness to questions and investigation human life is reduced to repetition and routine. We begin to live a life that is barely conscious. Kojève thought he saw elements of this emerging in the material consumerism of America and the purely snobbish formalism of Japanese Shintoism. In whatever guise it occurs, it will surely mean the end of human life as we know it. For us man has been defined as imperfect and as longing for perfection. If that perfection is attained, then we will no longer be as we are.

Fortunately, that possibility is not likely and therein lies the fourth and greatest danger of the Fukuyama thesis. By basking in the glow of an imaginary self-satisfaction liberal democracies will fail to take the steps to address the real problems confronting them. After all, if one is confident that one's system of government is the last word in political development, then it becomes difficult to contemplate the presence of radical deficiencies within it. This is the most damaging consequence of liberal apocalypticism.

For the truth is that the liberal democratic tradition is itself in trouble and may indeed be the next phase of modernity to disintegrate. Far from a triumphal political form, liberalism is today less certain than ever of what it stands for. Liberal societies are riven by debates of such a fundamental nature that their very continuation is in doubt. Principles that had been unchallenged for generations are now entirely up for grabs. Questions as elementary as the nature of human life and the rights that ought to be accorded to every human being can no longer be regarded as settled. We have difficulty in assigning an order of priority to the various "rights" that are asserted, and we

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find ourselves unable to find any rational basis for resolving the conflicting rights of individuals.

Many of the most profound contemporary thinkers have pointed to this dilemma. They are concerned about the large-scale dissolution that it suggests for liberal democracies. Alasdair MacIntyre, to pick only one prominent example, has called attention to the interminable and irresolvable nature of contemporary moral and political debates. In the absence of any common moral order, a rational frame of reference for the resolution of our disputes, then all relationships are reduced to a thinly disguised contest of wills. Public policy becomes a reflection of the shifting power configurations within society. In MacIntyre's memor-

able phrase, "politics is civil war carried on by other means."

Seen within this perspective, liberal democracy looks like anything but a triumphal end of history. It is in as much trouble as the ideological opponent over whom it has ostensibly emerged victorious. And is not this irony of success the real lesson that history teaches us? Besides, we ought not to be too surprised at the suggestion that the crisis of Communism extends into a crisis within liberalism too. What must be recalled is that they are both movements within the larger movement of modern civilization. Liberalism is the earlier manifestation of the modern spirit which eventually found more extreme expression within Communism and the other ideological movements. Despite their antagonisms, they are brothers under the skin.

What affects one is bound sooner or later to affect the other. If the Communist utopia has been declared illegitimate, the liberal technological utopia is also called into question. What is in doubt is the common modern faith in the capacity of man to bring about the perfection of his nature and the attainment of unending happiness in this life. The sense that man can dominate reality as a whole and can choose his life in perfect freedom is a pervasive attitude within liberalism as well. Now we are beginning to see, both in East and West, that we are not free to create whatever "values" we wish. There is a moral order that cannot forever be ignored.

HUMANITAS is a quarterly publication of the National Humanities Institute. Its purpose is to explore the relations among religion, ethics, art, politics, and economics, and to contribute to the reinvigoration and development of Western life and culture.

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H. Lee Check, Jr., *Editor*

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Subscriptions: *One year*, \$8; *two years*, \$15
Single copies, \$2.50 each

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It is this decline of the modern Promethean myth of human supremacy that is the most dramatic aspect of recent developments. There is emerging a recognition of limits. Humanity must live within an order that it discovers and is compelled to recognize, but of which it is in no sense the author. This is perhaps clearer in the East than in the West, although there are elements of it in our own increasing skepticism of the promises of technology. What is clear in either case is that the rediscovery of the moral foundation of political order is closely tied to the abandonment of all dreams of apocalyptic self-salvation.

We are not at the end of history precisely because we can no longer believe in the capacity of man to bring history to its end. The recovery of order after the enormous destructiveness of our century is dependent on the abandonment of all such messianic fantasies. Suggestions of a liberal perfection of history are as damaging as the revolutionary assertions of it. In all such cases it means the abolition of man as we know him. Without the struggle and search for attunement to an order beyond our control, human life loses its rationality, its drama and its vitality. We sink to the subhuman level of automata.

What distinguishes our present moment as a turning point is the sense of openness and relief when the burden of perfection has been lifted. We can breathe more freely and can move within an open horizon of possibilities. Preconceptions no longer block the way. What the future holds is not predetermined and cannot be predicted by us. We do not know if liberal democracy is the last word in political order or what developments may yet lie beyond it. And, freed from an enslavement to historical absolutes, we can orient our lives in relation to the truths and values that lie beyond time. Our future becomes, not something fixed forever, but a free exploration of the enduring in the changing circumstances of life.

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Irving Babbitt and the Christians

Claes G. Ryn

THE ESSAY BY James W. Tuttleton in the thirtieth-anniversary issue of *Modern Age* (Summer/Fall 1987) calls for some comment. "T.S. Eliot and the Crisis of the Modern" brings the reader back to the debate about humanism and religion that took place in the 1920s and 30s. Professor Tuttleton discusses the critique of the so-called New Humanism that was offered by Eliot and a few like-minded Christians. Their main target was the recognized intellectual leader of the movement, Irving Babbitt, who figures prominently in Professor Tuttleton's essay. (Babbitt's

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humanism should not be confused with the movement associated with John Dewey or with what is today called secular humanism.) Eliot greatly admired his former teacher at Harvard, but, after converting to Christianity, he published some critical reflections in which he questioned Babbitt's idea of the inner check and stressed the need for grounding ethics in traditional religion. Babbitt's close friend and ally Paul Elmer More had evolved in the direction of a Christian position and was treated with less suspicion. That Tuttleton should wish to revisit this intellectual controversy is understandable. It involves literary and intellectual figures of special stature in the twentieth century and contains much of continuing interest.

The debate can be fully understood and evaluated only after the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments of the participants have been carefully assessed. A perplexing feature of Tuttleton's essay is that it formulates the issue of humanism and religion in much the same terms in which it was formulated half a century ago by the above-mentioned

Christian critics of the New Humanists. Since that time an extensive scholarly literature has grown up that challenges the terms and the validity of that old critique of the New Humanism. What is puzzling is that Tuttleton's essay does not in any way reflect that writing. The reason may be that the article is primarily intended to present the issue of humanism and religion as it appeared to Eliot and some kindred writers like Allen Tate. Needless to say, Tuttleton should not be held responsible for views of theirs that he quotes or paraphrases. But he does not take exception to any of these opinions, presumably because he sees no need to do so, and he describes Babbitt in ways that extend and sharpen Eliot's criticism.

Scholars have thoroughly examined the old criticism of the New Humanism, especially as directed against Babbitt. Both Christian and non-Christian interpreters of his work have been taken to task for careless, sometimes even scandalous, misrepresentations and misunderstandings of his ideas and for lack of philosophical discernment and depth. All too many of those who attacked Babbitt had not studied his ideas in an intellectually serious manner and were sometimes content to repeat the unsubstantiated and superficial allegations of others. In the last several decades scholarship in this area has created a new setting for discussion of the humanism-religion controversy. One might mention, for example, the authoritative writings of the late Folke Leander, including *Humanism and Naturalism* (1937) and *The Inner Check* (1974), the work of George Panichas, exemplified by his essay "Babbitt and Religion" (*Modern Age*, Spring/Summer 1984), the collective volume *Irving Babbitt in Our Time* (1986), edited by George Panichas and myself, and work of my own such as *Will, Imagination and Reason* (1986), "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt Revisited" (*Modern Age*, Summer 1977), and "Babbitt and the Problem of Reality" (*Modern Age*, Spring/Summer 1984). A large number of other sources could be cited. To adopt the perspective of Tuttleton's essay is to return to an old and clearly inadequate "state of the question." While this perspective may be instructive for what it reveals about the mind of Eliot and some others at the time, it does not bring the philosophically substantive issues of the debate into focus. It certainly does not do justice to Babbitt's position.

Irving Babbitt is treated in Tuttleton's essay as a leading representative of a modernist humanism that Eliot rejects. But most of the definitions of this modernist stance that are

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provided in the article fit Babbitt very poorly or not at all. For example, it could hardly be said about Babbitt, the relentless critic of romantic imagination and the champion of classical standards, that he “substitutes amorphous feeling states for solidly grounded principles.” And he does not have “an optimistic view of human nature.” Neither does he refuse “to believe any longer in the radical imperfection of either man or Nature.” Most particularly, Babbitt cannot be counted among those who believe in consulting “only their own subjectivity.” These and other partial definitions of “humanism” are patently alien to his position. Tuttleton also places Babbitt in the company of a thinker like Bertrand Russell, an intellectual classification to which Babbitt would have strenuously objected. If Russell is a modernist humanist, Babbitt is something quite different.

Defining modernist humanism, Tuttleton speaks of “early twentieth-century writers who had abandoned the Christian past and begun a journey into the future virtually dissociated from the historic religious and moral tradition.” Babbitt

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is actually a sharp critic of such writers. His aim is to help save the ethical and religious core of the Western tradition and to work for a general revitalization of Western culture. It is with this goal in mind that he considers it necessary to face squarely the deepest challenges of modernity. Many “traditionalists” who think it sufficient merely to reaffirm inherited religious creeds and dogmas are not up to that particular task. Tuttleton asserts that Babbitt rejects revealed religion. But such a description of his position, if not placed in the proper context, is bound to mislead. The formulation is accurate only in a limited, qualified sense: Babbitt considers it short-sighted and intellectually feeble for modern defenders of ethical and religious truth to state their case in doctrinal terms that will be rejected out of hand not just by militant atheists and nihilists but by honest skeptics who are looking for intellectually persuasive evidence.

To the assertion that Babbitt rejects revealed religion Tuttleton adds that Babbitt is “thus rejecting the supernatural.” The latter characterization of his views is as questionable as the first. The many passages in Babbitt’s work that flatly contradict this interpretation can be

summed up in his explicit and emphatic statement that in the debate between naturalists and supernaturalists he ranges himself “unhesitatingly on the side of the supernaturalists.” (See Babbitt’s chapter in Norman Foerster, ed., *Humanism and America*, 1930.) On the basis of Tuttleton’s essay, who could imagine that Babbitt’s work is actually aimed at *refuting* naturalism, whose two main forms he calls “scientific naturalism” and “sentimental humanitarianism.”

Tuttleton states that Babbitt offers his notion of the inner check as “a substitute for ‘religious obligation’ and ‘religious restraint.’” This assertion is contradicted by overwhelming evidence and is mistaken in more ways than one. First of all, what Babbitt calls the “inner check” is precisely a sense of higher obligation and a power of restraint; and it is regarded by Babbitt as having a religious as well as a humanistic manifestation. He writes sympathetically and at length on the nature of the specifically religious life. It is true that Babbitt pays even more attention to what he calls the humanistic level of life. He argues that this plane of human existence is subject to a universal ethical standard that is intrinsic to it and that is ascertainable by the individual apart from religious faith or revelation. Suspicions based on these grounds that Babbitt wants to replace religion with humanism might just as well be directed at representatives of the old natural-law tradition. It is indicative of a kind of intellectual arbitrariness or recklessness in Babbitt’s Christian critics that they should neglect or disregard so much writing by him that contradicts their claims, including pointed and explicit statements seemingly intended by Babbitt to preclude misunderstanding of his views, as when he avers: “I am not setting up humanism as a substitute for religion.” (Babbitt, *On Being Creative*, p. xviii.)

In formulating the idea of the inner check, or higher will, Babbitt is not trying to talk Christians out of their beliefs. He is addressing all of those in the modern world who are not willing to accept ethical and religious truth on the authority of inherited dogmas. To these modern skeptics he argues, not that traditional beliefs are wrong, but that ethical and religious life do not stand and fall with Church authority. They have an experiential foundation. This concrete evidence found within the human consciousness itself is accessible to scrutiny. It remains compelling even if traditional ethical and religious authority is to be given no weight. Honest modern seekers after truth who claim to respect experience should be encouraged to consult this evidence. In Babbitt’s own words, he wants “to meet those who profess to be positive and critical on their own ground and to undertake to show them that in an essential respect they have not been positive and critical enough.” What Christians refer to in their accustomed theological language as “God’s will,” “grace,” et cetera, are not without an

observable basis in concrete human experience. Taking careful account of this experiential reality, Babbitt adopts a terminology—"the inner check," "the higher will," "the higher immediacy," et cetera—that avoids too close an association with traditional religious language that presupposes the truth of revelation and particular theological dogmas. If a person should prefer to interpret direct human experience in the light of Christian theology, Babbitt has no objection. He comments, "I have no quarrel with those who assume this traditionalist attitude" (Babbitt, *On Being Creative*, 1932, xvii-xviii).

Given the intellectual circumstances of the modern Western world, Babbitt is concerned that traditional creedal formulations not be presented as the sole support for religious and ethical life. A serious weakness of "dogmatic and revealed religion" is its difficulty in reaching modern non-believers and its tendency to restrict unduly the range of debate. Babbitt considers it unwise to frame ethical and religious issues in such a way that thinkers who are not Christian believers, or Christians of a particular denomination, are automatically relegated to inferior status as contributors to discussion. Babbitt despises "liberal" ethical and religious ecumenism of the most common, abstract, and sentimental kind, but he also insists that there is a universal element in mankind's ethical and religious experience that can form the basis for a more genuine ecumenical wisdom. Representatives of different faiths and also many who do not consider themselves religious in the ordinary sense can contribute to this core of insight.

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the common human ethical and religious ground as a threat to their own faith but as a helpful partial account and elucidation of what they believe. Babbitt's project was in fact warmly welcomed by many Christian intellectuals, not least by Roman Catholics such as Louis Mercier and Leo Ward. That so many of Babbitt's students or closest intellectual associates, e.g., Paul Elmer More, should have either retained or bowed towards Christian beliefs suggests that Babbitt's ideas are not an obstacle to confessionally oriented religion. It may be argued that Babbitt provides a grounding for ethical and religious life that protects it against the skepticism that is typical of the modern world. This Babbittian grounding makes ethics and religion less susceptible to the chronic doubt and the kind of aesthetical

religious posturing to which those are prone who deep down are not really convinced of the truth of their professed beliefs.

Eliot's critique of Babbitt can be seen in part as his somewhat strained declaration of independence from an intellectually powerful mentor. It is more of a devotional exercise by a religious convert than an incisive assessment of thought. Considering the aim of Babbitt's humanism and of his thought generally, Eliot's criticism is largely beside the point. His understanding of Babbitt's idea of the inner check is not very perceptive. This is the case however much his pious tones may have appealed to Christian partisans. The same can be said with even greater justification about Allen Tate's confused rendering of Babbitt.

WRITINGS THAT CRITICIZE thinkers for placing insufficient stress on God and traditional religion seem to be profoundly appealing and reassuring to large numbers of conservative intellectuals. Apparently, such writings convince of their intellectual soundness precisely because they have that sermonic ring. It is troubling that Eliot's (and Tate's) judgment regarding Babbitt seems to have been taken as persuasive by many Christians. Even Russell Kirk, who is one of Babbitt's strongest admirers, has given assent, although in a qualified and ambiguous way, to Eliot's complaint that Babbitt does not properly ground his understanding of moral order in traditional theology. (See Kirk's introduction to the recent new edition of Babbitt's *Literature and the American College*.) Is it indelicate or rude to point out that, in *philosophical* discourse, devotional sentiments are no substitute for accuracy, evidence, and cogency of argument? The interpretation and criticism of Babbitt by some religious partisans half a century ago illustrates that inherently weak reasoning is no stronger for being sprinkled with holy water. It is difficult to see how defenders of Christianity could benefit their cause by leaving the impression that they are not concerned to uphold the highest intellectual standards. Besides reading with care what Babbitt actually wrote, people prone to uncritical acceptance of Eliot's judgment would do well to ponder John Jamieson's chapter on Eliot, Babbitt, and Maurras in *Irving Babbitt in Our Time*.

It should perhaps be added that I have published extensive criticisms of Irving Babbitt. Hence these brief comments are not meant to imply that Babbitt is above intellectual reproach. But fair is fair, and prominent individuals speaking in the name of Christianity have published some of the least discerning comments on his position. One hopes that such prejudice will not hinder young Christian intellectuals from discovering in Babbitt a thinker whose thought can strengthen theirs.

Expanded Edition of Ryn Book on Democracy Released

JUST OUT FROM The Catholic University of America Press is the second, expanded edition of NHI Chairman Claes G. Ryn's *Democracy and the Ethical Life: A Philosophy of Politics and Community*. Noting that the "word *democracy* is both one of the most used and one of the most abused terms in modern Western political discourse," Ryn draws a sharp distinction between two forms of democracy which are shown to entail radically different views of man and society. Constitutional democracy is defended as potentially supportive of the ethical life, while plebiscitary democracy is criticized as undermining man's moral nature.

Democracy and the Ethical Life offers a new perspective on the American Constitution and the relationship between moral community and self-interest. Ryn's alternative to value relativism and positivism represents an original synthesis of classical, Christian, and modern ideas.

The book includes an extensive interpretation and refutation of the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and shows that, to the extent that forms of democracy inspired by Rousseau become ascendant, America's traditional constitutional order is threatened.

The original edition of *Democracy and the Ethical Life*, which was published by Louisiana State University Press, won high praise from reviewers. Described by Eliseo Vivas as an "impressive study of an important subject," by *Modern Age* as an "exceedingly useful book," and by Russell Kirk as "one of the more important studies in political thought to be published in recent decades," the book was hailed by historian Clyde Wilson as a "magnificent effort to reunite democracy and ethics."

The release of the second edition, which includes an important new section on the common good and the state of Western democracy, is exceptionally timely. It comes at a point when pronounced changes in the United States and abroad are prompting widespread recognition of the need for a careful reassessment of man's social and moral nature

and of what political arrangements are best calculated to promote man's highest ends. For those who are seriously engaged in that reassessment, Ryn's book offers many valuable insights. *The book (255 pp., paper) is available for \$14.95 from CUA Press, Customer Service, P.O. Box 4852, Baltimore, MD 21211, Telephone (301) 338-6953.*

In Memoriam

The year just ended brought the passing of Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Barbot Prior, long-time director of the South Carolina Historical Society and a devoted friend of the humanities throughout her adult life. As the mother-in-law of NHI President Joseph Baldacchino, Mrs. Prior took an intense interest in the work of NHI from its earliest days and gave unstintingly of her experience and advice as the Institute developed.

NHI takes this opportunity to acknowledge memorial gifts that were made in Mrs. Prior's honor by Edward D. Buckley, Esquire; Mr. and Mrs. Lee P. Hutchison; and Mrs. Dorothy D. Robinson, all of Mrs. Prior's native Charleston.

Besides her invaluable work in building the South Carolina Historical Society, Mrs. Prior was a prolific essayist and poet. The following poem, first published in *The North Carolina Poetry Review* in 1935, seems a fitting tribute to a lady in the finest tradition of her beloved South who contributed much during a well-spent lifetime and is remembered fondly by a multitude of relatives and friends.

Tell Her For Me

Tell her the dogwood blooms again
In a white blur 'mid April rain.
Tell her the sunlight filters through
In patterns on the road we knew.
Tell her that violets are deep—
Ah, deep!—where now she lies asleep.
And winds are blowing on the hill.
Tell her that I remember still.

—MARY ELIZABETH BARBOT

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