

CHAPTER 3

Requiescat in Pacem: *The Liberal Tradition of Louis Hartz*

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Louis Hartz died on January 29, 1986, at age sixty-six. Less than a year after his death, many of Hartz's former Harvard students and colleagues gathered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on January 23, 1987, for a conference devoted to his work. Although the circumstances of Hartz's death in Istanbul remained a mystery, it seemed to many in attendance an almost inevitable culmination of his tragic decline. After the breakdown that had precipitated his retirement from Harvard in 1974, only eighteen years after the American Political Science Association had awarded the Woodrow Wilson Prize to *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Hartz had slid into mental illness.

The poignant and reverential tone of the scholars at the conference surprised and impressed me. Hartz's former students spoke movingly about his undisputed brilliance as a teacher. The passion and intelligence of his lectures and seminars had left a deep and lasting mark. It is hard not to admire anyone capable of leaving such a legacy.¹ But again and again those in attendance went on to characterize Hartz as a peerless analyst of American culture and to describe *The Liberal Tradition in America* (hereafter cited as *LTA*) as the most incisive book ever written about America.²

That reverence seemed to me misplaced. As a historian of American thought I had become accustomed to historicizing *LTA*, reflecting on its significance as a document from the 1950s rather than as a useful guide to American political culture. I considered it a provocative but mistaken and misleading book, all the principal arguments of which had been shown by a generation of historians to be profoundly flawed. Throughout the day of

the conference I and a few other skeptics (notably the Harvard political theorist Judith Shklar) tried, both during the proceedings and between sessions, to inquire how a book wrong in each of its particular claims could still be right overall.³ At last one exasperated political theorist, as oblivious to the circularity of his claim as are those who rely on notions of repression and hegemony, announced that our evident failure to grasp the nature of American liberalism showed only the depth of our entanglement in the irrational assumptions that Hartz had so brilliantly laid bare.

Perhaps. I came away from that conference, however, more impressed with Hartz as a teacher and more firmly convinced of the shortcomings of *LTA*, a conviction that has grown in the last two decades as I have continued to study the history of American and European political thought and political practice. Despite the weaknesses of Hartz's argument, which I will outline in this essay, *LTA* established him as one of the most influential figures in American political science. That influence needs to be explained, and the renewed attention being paid to the historical analysis of the American social sciences by a rising generation of scholars may eventually illuminate the reasons for Hartz's rise to prominence. Although recent scholarship points in that direction, so far no one has provided the richly textured study that would enable us to locate Hartz in the sociological and institutional dynamics of the Harvard Government Department in particular and American political science more generally. Until that work is done, locating *LTA* in the sociology of knowledge of postwar American will be impossible.⁴

In this essay I advance two arguments that skirt questions about Hartz's personal history and his place in the discipline of American political science. First, whatever its importance as a historical document, whatever its merits as a piece of political theory, and whatever its value as a meditation on American culture and politics, *LTA* advances an argument about American history that is too flat and too static to be convincing. Because Hartz focused on issues of economics and psychology, he overstated their significance and missed the constitutive roles played by democracy, religion, race, ethnicity, and gender in American history. He therefore misunderstood (as thoroughly as did his predecessors and progressive bêtes noires Charles Beard, Frederick Jackson Turner, and Vernon Louis Parrington, whose work he sought to replace) the complicated and changing dynamics of the democratic struggle that has driven American social and political conflict since the seventeenth century. Hartz's analysis must be understood in the context of the early post-World War II era rather than treated as a source of timeless truths about America. Second, acknowledging the inaccuracies of *LTA* is important, because the widespread acceptance of its argument has

had consequences unfortunate for the study of American political thought and poisonous for political debate. The time has come to refocus our attention away from Cold War era controversies over liberalism and socialism, and away from late twentieth-century squabbles over liberalism and republicanism, and turn our attention toward democracy.

Of course, such liberal ideas as individual autonomy, representative government, and toleration of diversity remain important to the study of American culture. I want only to insist that liberalism historically has included just such ideals (which I have elsewhere called "the virtues of liberalism") and cannot be reduced to the self-interested assertion by individuals of the right to own property. Important as liberal ideas have been in American history, they have coexisted and interacted with others drawn from quite different religious, ethnic, and political traditions. In short, liberalism has been one among a number of strands in American public life.

Nor do I propose to replace a one-dimensional conception of liberalism with an equally unsatisfying one-dimensional conception of democracy; to the contrary, democracy provides an attractive analytical framework precisely because it highlights the ceaseless wrangling—the deep disagreements over procedures as well as principles—that has marked American history. Focusing on democracy need not imply any particular teleology. Although it is true that early twentieth-century progressive historians tended to lionize "the people" and demonize "the interests," such a simple Manichean model distorts the more complex historical reality these essays in this volume illuminate. Neither the masses nor the monied have played the parts written for them in such simpleminded morality tales. Instead, the combatants in American public life fought, and continue to fight, sometimes in quite unexpected ways and sometimes by forging odd alliances, as bitterly over rules as over results. The most radical and profound truth of popular sovereignty—one of the core principles of democracy—is that it puts everything up for grabs. The temporary outcomes of political struggles have generated not only endless challenges from the defeated but sometimes preemptive strikes from winners who feared the outcome of the next battle. Although I insist in this essay on the inadequacy of the idea of a "liberal consensus," I do not seek to put in its place an equally creaky notion of "democratic conflict" premised on assumptions about class, race, or gender antagonisms. The historical record is more complicated—and more fascinating.

In part from dissatisfaction with fractured narratives and in part from a yearning to understand those on the right or the left who have been dismissed as "un-American" by scholars or by popular perception, American

historians are returning to the study of politics. In part from dissatisfaction with behaviorism and rational choice theory and in part from a yearning to understand the relation between institutions and individuals, political scientists likewise are returning to the historical study of American politics. Historians need not, and most do not, resist theory as antithetical to our work. Many of the essays in this volume implicitly or explicitly draw on theoretical frameworks derived from social science; historical study surely need not be antitheoretical. But the human sciences are empirical disciplines, and only by continuing to test our theories against evidence can we keep them supple. The ideas Hartz advanced in *The Liberal Tradition in America* have become too brittle to be of further use.⁵

Hartz's thesis, although advanced by means of a rhetorical strategy calculated to dazzle his readers, was simple and elegant. He conceded that his approach could be characterized as a "single factor" analysis with two dimensions: "the absence of feudalism and the presence of the liberal idea."⁶ Because America lacked a feudal tradition, it lacked both a "genuine revolutionary tradition" and a "tradition of reaction." America contained instead only "a kind of self-completing mechanism, which insures the universality of the liberal idea" (5–6). In order to grasp the contours of this all-encompassing liberal tradition, Hartz argued, we must compare America with Europe. Only then can we understand not only the absence of socialism and conservatism but the stultifying presence and "moral unanimity" imposed by "this fixed, dogmatic liberalism of a liberal way of life." Moreover, the "deep and unwritten tyrannical compulsion" of American liberalism "transforms eccentricity into sin," an alchemy that explains the periodic eruption of red scares (9–12). In short, "the master assumption of American political thought" is "the reality of atomistic social freedom. It is instinctive in the American mind" (62).

Hartz advanced his interpretation by contrasting, in a series of chronologically arranged chapters, the nation's continuous history with the convulsions of European revolutions and restorations. He insisted that Americans' shared commitment to Lockean (or, as he spelled it, "Lockian") liberalism enabled them to avoid upheavals at the cost of enforcing conformity. He used "Locke" as a shorthand for the self-interested, profit-maximizing values and behaviors of liberal capitalism, against which he counterposed, on the one hand, the revolutionary egalitarian fervor of Jacobins and Marxian socialists and, on the other, the traditional hierarchical values of church elites and aristocrats under various European ancien régimes. Unfortunately, however, because Hartz never paused to explain exactly how he understood feudalism or precisely what he meant by

"Locke" or "liberalism," the meaning of his terms remained vague and his central claims somewhat fuzzy.⁷

It was an arresting argument, though, especially coming so soon after Senator Joseph McCarthy's anticommunist crusade and during a time of national self-congratulation, and Hartz's reviewers immediately acknowledged its persuasiveness. Historians as well as political scientists hailed the book. In the *American Historical Review* George Mowry called it "an extremely able and original interpretation." In the *William and Mary Quarterly* Arthur Mann credited Hartz with resisting the boosterism that had replaced critical analysis in postwar America. In the *Journal of the History of Ideas* Ralph Henry Gabriel applauded Hartz for showing how the Federalists and Whigs adopted the image of Horatio Alger to create an ideology of "Americanism" that proved impervious to the lure of socialism. In *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Marvin Meyers agreed with Hartz that Alexis de Tocqueville provided a more promising path toward understanding America than did Hartz's progressive predecessors.⁸

But unlike the many political theorists who still revere the book as an almost sacred text, historians also registered their misgivings about *LTA*. Mowry found "bewildering" Hartz's "claim for scientific analysis" and his reliance on "such terms as 'the democratic psyche' and a national 'Oedipus complex.'" Mann sounded the historian's call to Wilhelm Dilthey's hermeneutics: "The historian must somehow get *inside* the men of the past and recreate the world as they saw it" rather than criticizing them, as Hartz did repeatedly, for failing to see the deeper unanimity buried beneath their strident but shallow quarrels. "Political theory does not exist in a vacuum," Gabriel complained; Hartz's vague and imprecise analysis did to American thinkers what Walt Disney had done to Davy Crockett. Meyers noted that whereas Tocqueville did indeed stress the absence of feudalism in America, he also emphasized the importance of religion, the legacy of English law and liberty, the fact of slavery, the uniquely elevated status of women, the distinctive pattern of decentralized settlement in North America, a set of sturdy political institutions and wise founding documents, and other sociocultural, geographical, and demographic factors that together constitute the history of the United States.

The genre distinction between history and political theory helps to account for the divergence in assessments of *LTA*. The historians thought Hartz was flying too high to see clearly the details necessary for understanding the American historical record; political theorists, as Hartz's student Paul Roazen put it, instead appreciated that "Hartz had little interest in the study of political ideas as a scholastic exercise but rather wanted to use

Locke as a symbol for a brand of political thought that could illuminate political reality."⁹ Responding to Meyers and to equally stinging critiques delivered by Leonard Krieger and Harry Jaffa, Hartz ascended for refuge to the sanctuary of high theory: "Comparative analysis," he instructed his slow-witted historian-critics, "is destined to produce disturbing results. In the American case it seems suddenly to shrink our domestic struggles to insignificance, robbing them of their glamour, challenging even the worth of their historical study." Moreover, and here Hartz cut to the heart of the difference between the historian's interest in the particular and the social scientist's quest for the universal, "the comparative approach to American history is bound in the end to raise the question of a general theory of historical development."¹⁰

Again, perhaps, but perhaps instead the historians were right to scrutinize such general theories and measure them against evidence. Historians always "qualify" and "pluralize" the grander claims of social science, Krieger pointed out, and when we undertake that task with *LTA* we find that the fundamental comparison between the United States and Europe is misconceived. Had Hartz compared apples with apples, nations with nations, Krieger argued, he could have arranged European national traditions geographically and discovered that liberty, equality, and democracy have mattered rather less the further east one goes. National differences within Europe would loom as large as those Hartz had identified. Every national tradition is distinctive.¹¹ Adrienne Koch, reviewing Hartz in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, put the same point more bluntly: Hartz's method

produces no substantial documentation or analysis, but proceeds rather to pick up one name after another and freeze its arbitrarily selected essence to support the author's historical intuition. Individuality, chance, and the complex, specific coloration of a thinker's outlook are rudely sacrificed. . . . The net result of this "comparative method," which the author recommends as a means to make history "scientific," is to repeat and reaffirm what he is obligated to establish in the first place.¹²

Almost two decades after the publication of *LTA*, writing in response to yet another historian's critique of his cavalier treatment of evidence and failure to recognize the deep conflicts in American history, Hartz skirted the issue of evidence and reiterated his earlier proclamation of American uniqueness: "The United States is distinctive as against Europe, and its distinctiveness derives from the fact that the *Mayflower* left behind in Europe the experiences of class, revolution, and collectivism out of which the European

socialist movement arose.”¹³ The facts of history should be seen to flow from the framework Hartz provided, not vice versa. In his spirited defense of *LTA*, Roazen too invokes the genre distinction. He concedes the inaccuracies that critics have identified in Hartz’s treatment of individual thinkers and historical incidents, then explains that “Hartz was all along basically using history for the sake of eliciting answers to some theoretical queries in connection with the nature of a free society; and those fundamental issues remain with us today.”¹⁴

Those issues do indeed remain with us, which is why an accurate understanding of the nature of American political thought and experience remains important. Before embarking on a detailed account of the particular arguments of *LTA*, I want at least to note in passing the almost complete absence from Hartz’s analysis of four issues that now seem to us American historians essential to understanding our nation’s past: race, ethnicity, gender, and religion. To indict Hartz for overlooking issues that escaped the attention of most historians until recently seems unfair; such blindness surely typified most scholarly writing until the 1960s and still typified much—including my own—until even more recently. Even so, if one is trying to assess the persuasiveness of Hartz’s analysis from the perspective of 2010, acknowledging that American public life has revolved around crucial battles over race, ethnicity, and gender has become inescapable.¹⁵

The same is true of religion, which Hartz examined briefly in *LTA* but dismissed for reasons that merit discussion. Hartz contended that because religion in eighteenth-century America generated neither iconoclasm nor anticlericalism, it was of only minor significance. Colonial religious diversity “meant that the revolution would be led in part by fierce Dissenting ministers.” In Europe, “where reactionary church establishments had made the Christian concept of sin and salvation into an explicit pillar of the status quo, liberals were forced to develop a political religion—as Rousseau saw it—if only in answer to it.” But American liberals, “instead of being forced to pull the Christian heaven down to earth, were glad to let it remain where it was. They did not need to make a religion out of the revolution because religion was already revolutionary” (40–41).

These passages reveal two important characteristics of Hartz’s analysis. First, because the standard continental European—or, more properly, French and Italian—division between an anticlerical Left and an entrenched Church hierarchy generated cultural and political warfare and American religious divisions did not, Hartz concluded that religion in America could safely be fitted within the liberal consensus. Second, Hartz did not realize how corrosive to his argument was his concession that

American “religion was already revolutionary,” perhaps because, like many secular Jewish intellectuals in the middle of the twentieth century, he either failed to see or refused to acknowledge the pivotal role of Christianity in shaping American public life.¹⁶

Hartz did not understand that in America religious identity (like racial and ethnic identity and gender identity) has not been merely epiphenomenal, simply an analytical category separable from the *real* class identity at the core of all social life, but has instead been a central, constitutive component of American culture from the seventeenth century to the present. Almost all Americans’ “structures of meaning,” to use an apt phrase of David Hall’s, have derived from an unsteady blend of religious and secular, elite and popular, male and female, white and nonwhite cultures. For that reason religion does not shrink to insignificance but exerts a powerful force shaping individual decisions, interpretations of experience, and social interactions.

The diversity of Americans’ religious commitments prevented the emergence of a state church, as Hartz noted, but the depth and persistence of those commitments undermined the simple, straightforward Lockean attachment to self-interested property seeking that Hartz defined as the essence of America. Locke himself was no Lockean, at least in Hartz’s sense of the word, because of the depth of his Calvinist convictions. Similarly, Americans from the seventeenth century onward have struggled—as Tocqueville and Max Weber saw much more clearly than Hartz did—not merely for riches but also for salvation as they understood it. That quest has carried them toward a variety of goals not reducible to the simple maximizing of self-interest that drove and defined Hartz’s liberal tradition.¹⁷

The opening page of *LTA* contained a minor but telling error that makes clear why we must broaden our analytical focus from Hartz’s version of liberalism to a nuanced and dynamic conception of democracy. Seeking to replace the progressive historians’ focus on conflict with a focus on unanimity, Hartz adorned his book’s title page with an epigraph taken from Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*: “The great advantage of the Americans is, that they have arrived at a state of democracy without having to endure a democratic revolution; and that they are born free, instead of becoming so.” Unfortunately for Hartz, and for his readers’ understanding of American culture, Tocqueville had written that Americans were born *equal*, rather than free. The mistake, noted initially by errata slips and corrected in later editions, is less trivial than Hartz’s defenders have claimed. Had Hartz more carefully examined the passage in Tocqueville, he might have noticed its appearance at the end of a chapter preceded by Tocqueville’s

profound insight into the differences between the ancient vice of egoism and the modern, democratic tendency toward individualism. He might also have noticed that the passage was followed by Tocqueville's even more arresting claim that Americans "have used liberty to combat the individualism born of equality, and they have won."¹⁸

Although Hartz invoked Tocqueville repeatedly and criticized historians for neglecting the implications of his analysis, his own argument rests not on a simple, understandable error of transcription but on a deeper misunderstanding of Tocqueville's point. Tocqueville understood the consequences of the absence of feudal traditions and corporate institutions, and he warned that in a democracy "each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart." But he then pointed out—immediately after the passage Hartz misquoted for his epigraph—that participation in the "free institutions" of American democracy in fact mitigates these potentially anomic consequences. "Local liberties, then, which induce a great number of citizens to value the affection of their kindred and neighbors, bring men constantly into contact, despite the instincts which separate them, and force them to help one another."¹⁹

Whereas one might expect Tocqueville to have concluded—as Hartz indeed did—that self-interest leads democratic citizens away from the public interest and to lament the ways in which freedom (or, as the corrected versions of *LTA* properly have it, equality) erodes concern for others, Tocqueville made exactly the opposite point: "I have often seen Americans make really great sacrifices for the common good, and I have noticed a hundred cases in which, when help was needed, they hardly ever failed to give each other trusty support." Because the penultimate paragraph of that crucial chapter so directly challenges the heart of Hartz's argument and points toward the alternative interpretation I advance in this essay, I will quote it at length:

The free institutions of the United States and the political rights enjoyed there provide a thousand continual reminders to every citizen that he lives in society. At every moment they bring his mind back to this idea, that it is the duty as well as the interest of men to be useful to their fellows. Having no particular reason to hate others, since he is neither their slave nor their master, the American's heart easily inclines toward benevolence.²⁰

As that passage makes clear, Hartz flattened Tocqueville's rich conception of American democracy by eliminating the crucial significance of participation

in civic life. Such participation, Tocqueville insisted, prevented Americans from ignoring each other and nourished in them the animating and distinctive ethic of reciprocity that manifested itself prototypically in jury deliberations and implicitly in the broader culture of democracy. Although Tocqueville—like many members of the culture he was describing—did find it problematic that democratic citizenship was limited to white male property holders, he had identified the logic that eventually drove the United States to extend the privileges and duties of citizenship to all adults. That logic, like the ethic of reciprocity and the culture of participation, eluded Hartz entirely.

From the perspective of 2010, the historical errors of *LTA* only begin with the title page. As I examine the principal arguments Hartz advanced, I will very briefly compare his characterizations of (1) the American Revolution, (2) antebellum American politics, (3) the progressive era, (4) the New Deal, and (5) the culture of the post-World War II United States with the findings of more recent historical scholarship. It would be pointless to criticize Hartz for failing to see what it has taken half a century of historical scholarship to make clear. But it is equally pointless to claim, as some of Hartz's bolder champions continue to do, that *LTA* nevertheless remains a reliable guide to the history of American public life. For reasons I will outline in my conclusion, the stubborn persistence of belief in an American liberal tradition of the sort Hartz described obscures both our understanding of our nation's past and our ability to envision strategies toward a more democratic future.

Hartz laid out the heart of his analysis in the provocative opening chapter of *LTA*, "The Concept of a Liberal Society." Although he admitted the presence of some conflict in America, its shallowness prevented the development of political theory. "America represents the liberal mechanism of Europe functioning without the European social antagonisms" (16). That claim reveals his blinkered vision. Because American social antagonisms operated on fault lines different from those of European revolutionaries confronting landed and titled aristocracies, or from those of later European socialists confronting an entrenched, antidemocratic bourgeoisie, Hartz denied the existence of significant conflict and significant political thought in the United States. More recent commentators, more alert to the depth and persistence of disagreements over the fate and place of, say, Indians, blacks, Asians, Jews, Slavs, and Hispanics; more alert to the gender wars that divide generations, families, and coworkers; and more alert to the implications for political and social life of other fundamental cultural or religious differences, have put the problem in a different framework. In the combative words of Richard J. Ellis, one of the political scientists who dissents from

the view that has prevailed in his profession since the publication of *LTA*, "Political conflict in the United States has been and continues to be animated by fundamentally different visions of the good life. . . . That all sides appeal to terms such as equality or democracy or liberty should not conceal from us the fundamentally different meanings these terms have in different political cultures." Even the most casual glance at scholarship from the last three decades dealing with race, ethnicity, gender, or religion would suffice to confirm Ellis's judgment.²¹

The American Revolution, to begin where Hartz did, was from his perspective no revolution at all. Compared with the French Revolution, which served as his standard of measurement, what happened in the War for Independence merely codified what had previously been taken for granted in English North America. If Americans disestablished the Anglican Church, abolished primogeniture, and confiscated Tory estates, they were merely bringing to fruition processes already under way.²² If they separated the powers of government, further divided authority by establishing a federal republic, and provided for judicial review of legislative and executive decisions, those mechanisms merely testified to their deep, preexisting agreement on fundamentals. The scholarship of the last three decades has obliterated this aspect of Hartz's argument, not only—to cite the most obvious challenges—by demonstrating the centrality and force of republican and religious rhetoric and ideals, but even more centrally by showing the creativity of the democratic mechanisms adopted to deal with the genuine conflicts invisible to Hartz.

The significance of the American Revolution lay not so much in the founders' liberalism, which was complicated by its mixture with republican and religious values, as in their commitment to nourishing the seeds of a democratic culture. They constructed or altered institutions that made possible continuous mediation, the endless production of compromises, a system deliberately calculated to satisfy some of the aspirations of all citizens and all of the aspirations of none. From the declarations of independence adopted by towns, counties, and states in the spring of 1776 through the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, Americans authorized their representatives to gather together and deliberate on the form they wanted their government to take. Precisely because they could not agree once and for all on their common principles, they agreed to make all their agreements provisional and to provide, for one of the few times in human history, a range of escape hatches for dissent, ranging from a free press to the separation of church and state, from judicial review to provisions for amending the Constitution. It is true that such comfort with

compromise did indeed distinguish the American founders from later Jacobins and Bolsheviks. But it is crucial to see that they emphatically did not agree to codify atomistic individualism, because that idea appealed to practically no one—neither Federalists nor Anti-Federalists—in late eighteenth-century America. Although the sobersided John Adams has attracted more attention than most of his like-minded contemporaries, both his doubt that republican virtue would eradicate sin and his disdain for profiteering resonated widely in the new republic. He and his contemporaries were not trying to make a world safe for bankers—whose work Adams described acidly in a letter to Jefferson as "an infinity of successive felonious larcenies"—but were seeking instead to create a liberal republic safe for worldly ascetics, a "Christian Sparta" in the phrase of Samuel Adams, where even those who failed to reach that lofty ethical ideal might not only survive but thrive. Codifying the procedures of democracy was their means to that end.²³

Hartz's conviction that property holding and profit making exhausted the ambitions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Americans guided even his explicit analysis of state involvement in the economy in his first book, *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought: Pennsylvania, 1776–1860*. There Hartz argued that even though laissez-faire did not exist in early America, the activity of state governments served only to facilitate economic activity. The same assumption also drove his interpretation of antebellum America in *LTA*. Among the most explicit and convincing recent challenges to that analysis are the distinct but complementary writings of William J. Novak and Elizabeth J. Clark. Novak has demonstrated both the pervasive regulation, in myriad domains, of economic activity in antebellum America and, even more directly challenging Hartz, the equally pervasive reliance of courts on the principle of *salus populi*, "the welfare of the people," as the rationale used to justify that regulation.²⁴ Clark has shown the presence and explosive power of a different set of ideas missing from Hartz's account, ideas of sympathetic identification with slaves and other oppressed Americans, derived from diverse religious and secular sources, that motivated antebellum reformers and eventually coalesced in a sensibility that helped generate passionate loyalty to the Union cause.²⁵

From Hartz's perspective, the quarrels between Whigs and Democrats betrayed "a massive confusion in political thought" that stemmed from both sides' refusal to concede their shared commitment to liberal capitalism. Whereas Whigs really should have become Tories, and Jacksonians really should have become socialists, instead they all mutated into the "American democrat," a "pathetic" figure "torn by an inner doubt," "not quite a Hercules but a Hercules with the brain of a Hamlet" (117–119). To

Hartz's champions such writing is brilliant, but it masks a strategy that Hartz himself lampooned when he saw it in others. For example, Orestes Brownson was, in Hartz's words, "a classic intellectual"; in his disenchantment with America he "did not blame his theory: he blamed the world." Likewise Hartz, when confronting Whigs who advocated reform in a language of self-discipline and harmony and Jacksonians who spoke in terms of equality and democracy, refused to admit that antebellum Americans saw themselves, each other, and their culture in terms quite different from his. Rather than modifying, abandoning, or "blaming" his theory, Hartz merely "blamed the world" of American history. He lamented the "veritable jig-saw puzzle of theoretical confusion" generated by Americans who might have pretended to disagree over slavery, temperance, education, Indian removal, and a hundred other issues when, viewed from his vantage point, "the liberal temper of American political theory is vividly apparent" beneath all their disputes (140). The "confusion," though, is Hartz's rather than theirs, for it springs from these Americans' refusal to play their scripted roles as aristocrats and proletarians. Instead, they enacted an altogether different drama, inventing subtly nuanced and strangely amalgamated characters impossible to reduce to European types. The richness and complexity of the American historical record reveals the poverty of one-dimensional theory when it confronts that world.

Hartz conceded the anomalous quality of some southerners' defense of slavery, but he presented it as the exception that proved his liberal rule. Careful analysis of nineteenth-century America shows instead that within as well as between North and South, Americans differed on many fundamental issues. Only the culture and institutions of democracy (as Jefferson, James Madison, and Tocqueville all saw) provided ways to mediate those deep disagreements over issues as diverse as free speech, slavery, Sabbatarianism, temperance, polygamy, and the legitimacy of using the authority of government—local, state, and national—to regulate the behavior of individuals. John Stuart Mill looked to the United States for examples of government regulation antithetical to the conception of liberal freedom he articulated in *On Liberty*.²⁶ Only the election of Abraham Lincoln, who insisted that the principle of popular sovereignty must be yoked to the principle of autonomy for all Americans, made manifest that on one issue compromise had at last become impossible. Lincoln's election did not augur "the triumph of a theory of democratic capitalism" (199), as Hartz contended; it signaled instead, as Lincoln's second inaugural made plain, the finally irresistible tug of Augustinian Christianity and republican ideals away from the evil of slavery, the

deepest of all the divisions within the "liberal tradition" that Hartz imagined marching uninterrupted through American history.²⁷

If Andrew Carnegie and Horatio Alger were "the children of Lincoln's achievement" (199), as Hartz argued to explain Americans' purportedly unanimous embrace of laissez-faire after the Civil War, whence sprang the populists or Knights of Labor, Jane Addams or Lillian Wald, John Dewey or Herbert Croly, Richard Ely or Walter Rauschenbusch, Charlotte Perkins Gilman or W. E. B. DuBois? For that matter, how do we explain Theodore or Franklin Delano Roosevelt? Hartz understood progressivism, as did many of his contemporaries, including of course Richard Hofstadter, as Woodrow Wilson's futile yearning for a lost world of small towns and small businesses, an exercise in nostalgia with no political or economic consequences. But historians today must disagree.

Diverse and incompatible as their strategies were, progressives nevertheless constructed from the materials they inherited a new order in governance, law, business, social organization, and culture. Louis Brandeis lost his battle against bigness. Yet the government regulation of private enterprise remains a permanent fact of life, rising and falling with public enthusiasm for, say, automobile safety or environmental protection. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People failed to enact all of the program announced when it formed in 1909–1910, yet the civil rights movement, launched as *LTA* appeared, employed not only rights-talk but images of deliverance and salvation from Exodus and Matthew rather than Hartz's language of the main chance. The crusade for women's rights reached only a limited fulfillment in the franchise, yet feminists have invoked a variety of ideals concerning moral autonomy, civic responsibility, and more egalitarian households equally incompatible with Hartz's framework. Finally, the more social-democratically inclined American progressives failed to achieve their goals of a more egalitarian structure for work or wages, yet, from the platforms of the Populist Party in 1892 and the Progressive Party in 1912 through the agendas of the New Deal and the Fair Deal, such ambitious plans were at the heart, rather than on the margins, of political debate. To underscore the point, all were utterly inconsistent with Hartz's notion of an American liberal tradition. Some Americans, such as the opponents of the Civil War amendments and the members of the New York bourgeoisie who sought to shrink the franchise, did defend the prerogatives of wealthy white males in terms that would fit within Hartz's framework. It is important to remember that they failed to hold back the tides of democracy they feared.²⁸

Hartz, writing in the shadow of McCarthyism, expected that all the moderate reforms of the twentieth century would meet the same fate. "Where capitalism is an essential principle of life," he wrote, "the man who seeks to regulate it is peculiarly vulnerable to the waving of the red flag." Just as Hartz could concede the presence of regulation in antebellum America and dismiss its significance (209–210), so his magic wand made Addams, Dewey, Ely, Croly, Gilman, and DuBois—and all they stood for—disappear. Where, he asked, were the American analogs of the British collectivist philosopher T. H. Green and the "new liberal" publicist L. T. Hobhouse and of the French and German moderate social democrats Jean Jaurès and Edward Bernstein? Whereas such Europeans shared a "frank recognition of the need for collective action to solve the class problem," Americans missed the point. Wages and hours legislation and workmen's compensation were but the "loose marginalia" of the progressive movement. Croly's democratic nationalism dissolved into "practically unintelligible rhetoric" (230, 233). Progressives, in Hartz's words, wanted only "to smash trusts and begin running the Lockian race all over again. But even the pathetic hope of Brandeis was blasted with an outpouring of liberal irrationalism" that made any notion of organization likely to be "denounced as 'un-American'" (223). In *LTA* the religious or ethical impulses that drove the social gospel, the founders of social settlements, and the architects of social security vanish beneath a fog of liberal individualism. The progressives' enduring achievements, from the graduated income tax through regulation of the economy, not surprisingly never surface.

Hartz insisted that European progressive reformers such as David Lloyd George and Léon Bourgeois could flirt with, and even ally with, socialists such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb or Jaurès, but that path, he insisted, remained closed in America. As I have tried to make clear elsewhere, this analysis relies on a widespread but faulty understanding of the dynamics of reform in England, France, and Germany as well as in the United States during these crucial years. Moderate social democracy (sometimes designated "revisionism" or "Fabianism" to indicate its divergence from Marxism) in these European nations emerged for some of the same reasons and made possible the appearance of quite similar coalitions, as those behind the more social democratic American progressive reform measures. The disappearance of those coalitions, which Hartz attributes in the American case to the red scare orchestrated by A. Mitchell Palmer after World War I, had consequences just as dramatic in England and France as in the United States. The consequences in Germany, of course, were far deadlier.²⁹

Why did Hartz miss the substantial similarities and that dramatic difference? The answer reveals another reason why his analysis is no longer convincing two decades after 1989. "The attitude toward socialism remains, however, the final test of Progressive 'Americanism'" (243). That standard of judgment, reasonable as it might have been at the time, no longer seems compelling. How many decades should historians wait before inverting Werner Sombart's question and asking, Why was there socialism in Europe? Given his Eurocentric framework, Hartz understandably placed the piecemeal, pragmatic New Deal, limited as it was by Roosevelt's ability to forge a consensus from the fractured pieces of his party's coalition, comfortably within the liberal tradition. "What emerges then in the case of the New Deal is a liberal self that is lost from sight: a faith in property, a belief in class unity, a suspicion of state power, hostility to the utopian mood, all of which were blacked out by the weakness of the socialist challenge in the American liberal community" (270). This interpretation of the limits of the New Deal has since become standard; only varying degrees of admiration (from the center) or contempt (from left and right) for FDR's moderation have distinguished the major studies written in recent decades.

Historians have paid surprisingly little attention to the New Deal's unfulfilled social democratic agenda. FDR's 1944 State of the Union Address called for a "second bill of rights" assuring all Americans access to education, a job with a living wage, adequate housing, medical care, and insurance against old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment. Never mind that such ideas had been percolating in Roosevelt's administration since his Commonwealth Club speech in 1932, that Roosevelt thought the ambitious proposals for social provision contained in England's Beveridge Report derived so directly from the plans of his own administration that it should have been called "the Roosevelt Report," that FDR campaigned—and was in fact reelected—on just such a platform in 1944, that Harry S. Truman made such proposals the centerpiece of his Fair Deal, or that such ideas were at the heart of the G.I. Bill. The components of this far-reaching legislative program, caught in the cross fire between an incipient Cold War aversion to anything resembling government activity and Southern Democrats' intensified animosity toward anything resembling or contributing to equal treatment of African Americans, went down to defeats so decisive in Congress that historians refuse to believe either FDR or Truman could have been serious about them. More consistent with Hartz's concept of a liberal individualist, antigovernment straightjacket than with the historical evidence, such treatments confirm—indeed, seem to rest on—Hartz's judgment: since the New Deal did not try to bring socialism to America, its reformism must have been tepid at best.³⁰

But in 2010, perhaps we American historians should stop using socialism as the litmus test of reform in the United States. When Hartz was writing, the social democratic governments sweeping into power across Northern Europe had only recently traded in their comprehensive socialist economic programs for more limited agendas featuring mixed economies supplemented with more or less extensive welfare states. The Social Democratic Party of Germany continued to speak the language of Marxism until the Bad Godesberg program of 1959, but it was already getting lonely on the left. Elsewhere in Western Europe the coalitions of urban professionals, farmers, and industrial workers that supported postwar social democratic governments surrendered the apocalyptic rhetoric of revolution. As Claus Offe and, more recently, Herrick Chapman and George Reid Andrews have pointed out, the post-World War II welfare states of Northern Europe depended more on a democratic consensus than American democracy ever did. The intensified pressure of unprecedented immigration and the subsequent diversification of population have led to increasingly wary and ungenerous electorates everywhere; only in America did progressives ever dare to proclaim that they were building their coalitions, as FDR and Truman (and later Lyndon Johnson) did, on celebrations of such diversity. In Scandinavia, as in Britain and throughout northwestern Europe, voters backed social democratic parties that promised economic growth for their nations and members of their constituencies as enthusiastically as they promised greater security and increasing equality.³¹

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, it is easy for us to discern the steady transformation of European labor parties from revolutionary Marxism to varieties of reformist social democracy, a political position far less distant from the left wing of the twentieth-century American Democratic Party than were European socialist parties earlier in the century. Not only the styles but, more importantly, the policies embraced by the British Labour Party, the German Social Democratic Party, and the French Socialist Party bear striking similarities to those of progressives in the U.S. Democratic Party. Hartz, writing in the wake of right-wing repression at home, confronting a hostile communist presence in Eastern Europe and Asia, and pondering the prospect of anticolonial revolutions looming elsewhere, could not have anticipated that development. Writing in the wake of 1989, we should not continue to ignore it.

Despite that process of development, that emergence of a "third way" in fact prior to its announcement as an ideology in the 1990s, it would be an obvious error to exaggerate the appeal of social democratic agendas. In Europe as in the United States, forces with deep cultural roots opposed every

aspect of that program; on both sides of the Atlantic they have succeeded in tapping into widespread and passionate commitments. Americans' long-standing fears of inflation and aversion to taxation and their attachments to localism and various social, religious, and cultural traditions combined to propel the conservative political movement that has dominated public life in recent decades. Although acknowledging the legitimacy of their opponents' claims to embody authentic American traditions has been difficult for social democrats, just as seeing egalitarianism as an aspiration with deep roots in American history has been difficult for the New Right, it is time to abandon shopworn stories about "the people" battling heroically against "the interests." Preferences for the local over the national, the familiar over the novel, and authority and hierarchy against racial, class, and gender equality are as old as the United States. Pretending such commitments betray rather than perpetuate American traditions obstructs our understanding of our nation's past and its present.³²

Assuming that we scholars know Americans' deeper or more authentic aspirations has inspired a generation of scolding or wishful thinking masquerading as history, political science, or cultural studies—on both ends of the political spectrum. Individuals have different ideas about human motivation: Karl Marx's concept of false consciousness, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge remind some analysts of consent and consensus. Rather than presuming to identify genuine preferences beneath Americans' choices as voters or consumers and to discern deeper longings buried beneath behavior we dislike, it is more fruitful to examine the struggles that have shaped our nation from a different point of view: the perspectives of those who fought them. Many scholars have unwittingly adopted Noah Webster's creed: "For God's sake, let not falsehood circulate without disproof," seeking, in his words, "to keep public opinion correct" by showing the perfidy of power.³³ Historians of American politics should exchange that arrogance for the more modest task of coming to grips with the complex evidence we face.

Hartz worried about Americans' smug assumption that they had solved their own problems and that other nations, both emerging and established, should simply follow their lead toward a paradise of consumption and complacency. As he expressed his anxiety early in *LTA*, "Can a people that is born equal ever understand peoples elsewhere that have become so?" (66). From that stark question to the wrenching national debate over Vietnam is a very short distance; indeed, the terms of that debate helped confirm Hartz's book as a classic and helped establish him as a sage. Given the current discrepancy between, on the one hand, the enthusiasm toward the

United States expressed by the elites of many other nations and, on the other, the distrust often sliding toward contempt toward the United States expressed by many of the world's dispossessed peoples, Hartz's insight into the problematic nature of America's tendency toward self-satisfied provincialism remains perhaps the most incisive part of the book, as valuable today as it was in 1955.

For the two decades between the publication of *LTA* and Hartz's resignation from Harvard, admiration for the book and its author mushroomed. The oracular quality of Hartz's writing, which elicited awe during a period when European émigrés such as Karl Popper, Eric Auerbach, Hannah Arendt, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, and Leo Strauss were producing their masterworks, now rankles. Few historians or political theorists in our hyperhistoricist culture of irony adopt a similar tone of voice. Consider a typical example of Hartz's rhetorical style:

American pragmatism has always been deceptive because, glacierlike, it has rested on miles of submerged conviction, and the conformitarian ethos which that conviction generates has always been infuriating because it has refused to pay its critics the compliment of an argument. Here is where the joy of a Dewey meets the anguish of a Fenimore Cooper; for if the American deals with concrete cases because he never doubts his general principles, this is also the reason he is able to dismiss his critics with a fine and crushing ease. . . . History was on a lark, out to tease men, not by shattering their dreams, but by fulfilling them with a sort of satiric accuracy. (59–60)

Although this is writing of rare eloquence—even brilliance—historians usually want clarity and evidence served alongside such rich turns of phrase. Yet Hartz repeatedly relied on allusions and epigrams when he needed to develop arguments. Readers must know what Hartz meant not only when he dropped relatively familiar names such as Robert Filmer and John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Joseph de Maistre, Karl Marx and Auguste Comte, or John Dewey and James Fenimore Cooper, they must also know, because Hartz provided no clues to their identity, many more-obscure thinkers on whose significance the persuasiveness of his particular arguments rests. To choose only a small random sample—French figures whose last names begin with the letter *B*—how many readers could identify Gracchus Babeuf, Pierre Simon Ballance, Pierre Nicolas Berryer, Louis Blanc, Vicomte Louis Gabriel Bonald, Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, Louis Boudin, and Aristide Briand? Few American readers, today or fifty years ago, know the questions

to which those names provide the answers. Although Hartz engaged in a sophisticated form of intimidation, it was intimidation nonetheless: readers who fail to grasp the force of a comparison are left doubting their judgment in the face of Hartz's apparently effortless erudition.

Yet many of Hartz's allusions and comparisons—as in the case of eighteenth-century American revolutionaries and French philosophes, in the case of the early twentieth-century European progressives and social democrats for whom no American analogs are said to exist, or in the case of his comments on American pragmatism—fall flat when one is familiar with the individuals or incidents involved. Given Hartz's soaring flights of rhetoric, applying standard rules of evidence to *LTA* can seem pointless. Aphorisms and witticisms are perhaps better judged on cleverness than verifiability. It is hard—even meaningless—to determine whether the sentences in, say, Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* are "true." Yet, unlike Nietzsche, Hartz made empirical claims, and when one applies the test of evidence, they fail as often as they succeed. Even within the genre of political theory, that is a serious problem.

Equally unsettling from our perspective in 2010 is Hartz's breezy implication that the works of notoriously complex thinkers such as Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Jefferson, Madison, or Lincoln have a unitary meaning. Since Hartz wrote, the scholarship on all these thinkers has developed to the point that such one-dimensional interpretations seem not only unconvincing but simpleminded. Yet even a half century ago most political theorists and intellectual historians exhibited greater care when characterizing the ideas of complicated thinkers. In short, even when Hartz wrote, his bold style stood out, but his dazzling displays of erudition and his equally sparkling prose bought him credibility.³⁴ These days, hanging arguments on personal authority is out of fashion; we prefer the hermeneutics of suspicion. When we see Hartz offering an epigram or sliding over an inconvenient fact or discrepancy, we want to examine the evidence and reconsider the analysis. As Hartz might have put it, when his writing asks us to genuflect, we raise an eyebrow instead.

What can Hartz mean, for example, by "the joy of a Dewey" or "the anguish of a Fenimore Cooper" in the passage quoted above? Given Dewey's deep dissatisfaction about the distance between his own radical democratic politics and his own educational theory and the more limited achievements of twentieth-century American reformers and so-called progressive educators, and given Cooper's indomitable, triumphalist nationalism, one might as easily (and perhaps just as accurately) invoke "the anguish of a Dewey" and the "joy of a Fenimore Cooper." But in either case imagery plays Charlemagne to

meaning, doing all the analytical work and leaving readers puzzled. All of us call attention to our writing sometimes, depending on shorthand or metaphor to do our work for us (as I did in the preceding sentence). *LTA* depends heavily on such sleights.

To continue this exercise with another example, if "miles of submerged conviction" lie beneath pragmatism and that conviction generates a "conformitarian ethos" that "has refused to pay its critics the compliment of an argument," why did Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, George Herbert Mead, and Dewey have to work so hard to explain and defend themselves against critics (and each other) from the moment Peirce tried to explain how we make our ideas clear? Scrutinizing the pragmatists' writings would have forced Hartz to confront their head-on challenge to his assumptions about Americans' thoroughgoing, unexamined individualism undergirding his argument. Like the religious language of eighteenth-century America or the more social democratic wing of American progressivism, pragmatism remained absent from *LTA*.

Finally, if history can "go on a lark," what would happen if it kept its shoulder to the wheel? In short, these sentences, like many others that glitter through *LTA*, disintegrate into nonsense when subjected to analysis. Given Hartz's intelligence, acid wit, and penchant for dramatic flourishes, he might perhaps have followed the course of other gifted writers such as Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, who dabbled in nonfiction as contributors to *Fabian Essays in Socialism* before turning their talents to the theater.

Instead, Hartz devoted himself after *LTA* to defenses and elaborations of his "fragment theory" of comparative cultural development and then, in the final years of his life, to rambling ruminations on the meaning of world history. In one of his most compelling pieces of writing, an essay published in 1960, "Democracy: Image and Reality," Hartz undertook to expand his argument in *LTA* to encompass contemporary debates over democracy. This essay shows his characteristic imagination and insight. In the end, however, it merely reframes Hartz's argument about American exceptionalism and again subordinates the untidy evidence of history to the spare elegance of his analytical scheme. The ideas and institutions of liberal democracy emerged, Hartz wrote in "Democracy: Image and Reality," against the world of "church, guild, and province," which compelled the democratic "system to define itself in terms of the one it seeks to undermine." Thus, democrats elevated reason, individualism, and equality, thereby creating a democratic myth to replace the myths propping up the ancien régime. But democracy after its triumph proved unable to sustain those values in practice. Disillusionment inevitably followed the discovery that elites could

maintain their power by manipulating the irrational impulses of the masses. Hartz recommended patience rather than despair in the face of such knowledge because the disenchantment likely in communist nations, saddled with the weight of even loftier expectations, would eventually bring them down.

Hartz's conclusion in this essay appeared to point in a direction opposite to that of *LTA*: "It would be absurd to say, in light of all the popular social reforms of the last century, that democracy has not produced more decisions in the popular interest than the will of eighteenth-century aristocracies." In short, Hartz admitted, Bernstein was right: Liberal democratic states in Europe had managed to achieve what Marx judged impossible, and the revisionists' "faith in the ultimate universality of the democratic state was a sound one." But Europe remained the standard of comparison for Hartz's analysis, and liberalism remained the heart of the matter. "The truth is, intellectually we have only experienced *one* revolution in modern times, and that is the revolution of the Enlightenment. The negative idealism that liberalism forged in the fight against feudalism, with its images of individuality, rationality, and the popular will," provided both democrats and Marxists with the weapons they needed.³⁵

As in *LTA*, however, Hartz presented a deviant American case spinning away from a West European norm. He was now contrasting America against an even more wildly divergent communist world, but the logic of his exceptionalist model remained intact. With Thomas L. Haskell, I believe we should dispense with such conceptions of America—whether exceptionalist or antiexceptionalist—and adopt what Haskell calls a "postexceptionalist" perspective that might enable us to follow the historical evidence without claiming "to have discovered in the uniqueness of national experience an explanatory key that unlocks all doors." Liberated from debates between exceptionalists and antiexceptionalists, we can "admit that sweeping claims and counterclaims about the similarity or difference of entire nations will forever elude empirical resolution." As historians, we might find that a post-exceptionalist perspective prevents us from freezing our evidence into the static typologies that prevented Hartz, even at his best, from dealing with the particularities of different times and different nations.³⁶

The posthumous publication of Hartz's final work, *A Synthesis of World History*, shows how the most troubling of Hartz's tendencies in *LTA* spun out of control in his later years. Hartz aspired in his last book to explain all the philosophical systems in world history by reducing them to the allegedly universal psychological tension between "action" and "quiescence," or "thrust" and "surrender." Political as well as religious ideas could

be stretched across the same grid: in Christian theology he contrasted the “active” Thomas Aquinas to the “passive” Augustine, in China the “active” Confucians to the “passive” Taoists, in America—although of course ranged across a narrower spectrum, as appropriate for the liberal fragment Hartz had anatomized in *LTA*—the “active” Jeffersonians to the “passive” Whigs. The book shows all the ambition of Montesquieu, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, or Max Weber, all the iconoclastic fervor of Voltaire, Friedrich Nietzsche, or Sigmund Freud, without the necessary subtlety and analytical precision to give it force:

Now what is the distinctive genius of the thinkers? They are individually “great,” intrinsically powerful. Yet each worked with the same issue of human action and quiescence, utilizing its characteristic essences, legislation and consensualism, atomism and symbiosis, worldliness and localism, mind and ardent belief. Indeed it is by no means too much to say that they can be made interchangeable by a manipulation of the categories of that issue as a mathematician converts form into form. Shift the metaphor, and they can be created out of one another as a chemist recreates compounds.³⁷

Although Hartz’s grip was clearly slipping when he wrote *A Synthesis of World History*, the tendencies toward too-rigid typology, psychological reductionism, and the simplification of complex thinkers to fit a brittle framework all echo, albeit in exaggerated form, the worst features of *LTA*. Both books reflect a common attitude toward the relation between theory and history and a common methodology that privileges the insights of the analyst and refuses to take seriously, on their own terms, the ideas, values, or lives of those being analyzed.

Why does Hartz’s analysis of America’s liberal tradition matter in 2010? Why can’t we historians simply acknowledge the book’s significance as a product of the 1950s and leave it at that? Unfortunately, Hartz’s argument has proved so powerful and so resistant to critics’ charges that its legacy has had serious consequences of two sorts in America since the 1950s, consequences that merit consideration.

First, Hartz persuaded many American political theorists that there is no reason to study American political thought. Because America had no social conflicts, he argued, Americans contributed “relatively little political thought at all.” Given moral consensus, “political philosophy did not have to get going in the first place.” As a result, undergraduates and graduate students interested in political theory have learned to grapple with the writings

of Rousseau or Hegel or Marx, but most of them have learned little or nothing about the American intellectual tradition. Hartz himself seems to have focused most of his energies as a teacher on European thinkers, and the profession has followed his lead.³⁸

Not only is it possible to earn a Ph.D. in a first-rate graduate program in political science without having studied American political thought, but few courses in the field exist. Few political scientists consider it worth studying. At least four distinct reasons can be offered to explain this odd phenomenon. First, political theorists usually concentrate on philosophers in the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, Hegel and Marx, who derived their politics from elaborate systems ranging from ontology to metaphysics. The American tradition has indeed produced few such thinkers. Second, the style of linguistic analysis that has dominated Anglo-American philosophy since the middle of the twentieth century has been inhospitable to issues of the sort discussed by earlier American political theorists. Although recent theorists, following the lead of John Rawls, have returned to such concerns, most of them have also followed the methodology of the early Rawls, concentrating on thought experiments and eschewing a historical approach. Third, the discipline of political science continues its curious obsession with what Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro have fittingly termed the “pathologies of rational choice theory,” a peculiar analytical approach that is antagonistic to the classic concerns of political theory. In the words of William Riker, a founding father of a way of thinking uneasy with the notion of “founding” because of its historical implications, political scientists should dispense with “traditional methods—i.e., history writing, the description of institutions, and legal analysis,” because such work can produce at best only wisdom, not science. Finally, a large number of those who teach political theory in American universities are the students (or the students of students) of two influential scholars who agreed on little but the insignificance of American thought, Leo Strauss and Louis Hartz.³⁹

Hartz’s devaluing of American political thought has thus helped justify the failure of American political scientists to take seriously their own heritage, poor as it is in Aristotles and Hegels but rich in debates about what democracy is and what it should be. Ideas have been at the center of American popular political debates since the seventeenth century. Because citizenship in the English North American colonies was relatively widespread from the outset, writers of compacts, covenants, constitutions, laws, and (at least until fairly recently) court decisions in America have sought to communicate with a broad public in terms ordinary people could understand and endorse. For that reason, as Donald S. Lutz has demonstrated, students of

American political theory should examine the meanings of public texts rather than limiting their attention to a canon of abstract political philosophy.⁴⁰ From Plato onward, most of the writers of "great books" of political philosophy either never had to deal with the problem of implementing their ideas, or, when the opportunity presented itself, came up with schemes quite different from those suggested in their theoretical treatises. Locke, for example, dreamed up a semifeudal never-never land in response to his friend the earl of Shaftesbury's invitation to write a constitution for the colony of Carolina. Rousseau prescribed for Poland a constitution allowing room for aristocrats, serfs, and forms of representative democracy inimical to the republican forms he envisioned for his native Geneva or for unspoiled Corsica. Unlike Benjamin Franklin's observation about a hanging, such opportunities to turn the abstract into the concrete can wonderfully muddle the mind.

Most of America's most enduring theorists, by contrast, have been actively involved in the complexities of the political process. For that reason their writings show not only a distinctive engagement with the practical questions of democratic governance but an equally distinctive tensile strength that professors and students of political theory, hurrying to get from Locke and Rousseau to Mill and Marx and then on to Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, fail to grasp in their quick readings of *Federalist* Number Ten and John C. Calhoun's *Disquisition on Government*. Hartz's portrait of America's "liberal tradition," by denying the depth and seriousness of the issues addressed by those who have shaped America's political and legal traditions, helped authorize such unfortunate disregard, and the enduring respect of political theorists for *LTA* perpetuates it.

A second consequence of the widespread acceptance of Hartz's argument has been the tendency to assume that the only authentic, legitimate questions of American politics are those concerning self-interest, individual rights, and the sanctity of personal property. This astonishing assumption is shared across the political spectrum. As John Diggins has pointed out, there is a surprising congruence between Hartz's *LTA* and Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*. Both books reduce Americans to a band of single- and simpleminded consumers who lack the personal or cultural resources to see beyond the appeals of corporate and/or mainstream political advertisements. Whereas free-market capitalists and conservative cultural commentators unanimously dismissed Marcuse's diagnosis as simplistic and his prescriptions for reform as proto-totalitarian, they have tended implicitly to endorse Hartz's analysis, perhaps because it led, as he admitted himself (33), only to a shoulder-shrugging acceptance of unthinking individualism and market "imperatives."⁴¹

The ready embrace by radical scholars of Hartz's portrait of a one-dimensional American tradition, which depends on ignoring or denying the significance of a continuing series of democratic reform efforts stretching from the seventeenth century to the present, ironically reinforces the assumptions such scholars intend to criticize and transform. For if property holding alone mattered to Americans in the past and matters in the present, and if frontal (i.e., socialist) challenges to the institution of private property alone can be judged genuinely radical, then perhaps America should be defined as nothing more than a culture of consumer capitalism (so too should Great Britain, Germany, France, Denmark, and Sweden). That way of thinking seems better suited to the interests of free-marketeers than to those calling for America to become more egalitarian, but a surprising number of leftist scholars in the fields of law, philosophy, political theory, and history have embraced it. Criticizing Hartz thus ruffles feathers across the contemporary political spectrum. Too many people, right and left, have too much invested in the idea of an American liberal tradition to surrender it without a fight.

By diminishing the significance of democratic thinkers, activists, and movements in American history, those who continue to endorse Hartz's notion of a liberal tradition—whether from the right or the left—consciously or unwittingly reinforce the claims of those who define as un-American any conception of radical democracy. Challenging hierarchies, reasoning from the logic of the principle "one citizen, one vote" to the conclusion that economic power should not extend into social and political power, has been a recurring theme in American history. But such battles never end: disagreement, deliberation, and provisional compromises that in turn generate new disagreements are the ineluctable dynamic of democracy.

The Liberal Tradition in America came to prominence just as John Dewey's ideas went into eclipse. Perhaps the recent renaissance of American pragmatism will help refocus attention on the potential harmonies that Dewey envisioned between our culture's commitments to open-ended scientific inquiry and his ideal of an open-ended, experimental, pluralist democracy. Only when viewed through the backward telescope of Hartz's liberal tradition do the struggles for a democratic culture that Dewey saw at the heart of American history shrink to insignificance. For the sake of historical accuracy as well as democratic renewal, we should widen our focus as scholars to the projects that Tocqueville identified, the sometimes successful efforts to build a democratic culture on an ethic of reciprocity, efforts blurred beyond recognition by Hartz's distorting lens.

Hartz was worried about America's relevance to a world of nations shaking themselves free from the bonds of colonialism. Today the United States seems not only relevant but, despite the recent return to older patterns of imperial bullying and the current economic crisis, in at least certain respects a model. Developed and developing nations alike are drawn toward our sturdy democratic political institutions and our troubled but still relatively stable state-regulated market economy. The enthusiasm of the early 1990s for unchecked market economies in the formerly communist nations of Eastern Europe has faded into a renewed appreciation of the fundamental importance of popular sovereignty and the rule of law. The business scandals of 2002 and the collapse of 2009 have shown Americans the perils of the cowboy capitalism that has been preached by many in the Republican Party since 1980. Skepticism about business lends renewed luster to the progressives' idea of a mixed economy overseen by a vigilant regulatory state. The systematic dismantling of the regulatory apparatus by the administration of George W. Bush has been almost universally credited with having made possible the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. In the wake of September 11, 2001, public authority briefly demonstrated again not only its indispensability but its potential effectiveness when exerted with resolve in behalf of the common good. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the failures of laissez-faire and government by cronies were likewise painfully exposed. Especially when popular government is mobilized from the ground up rather than from the top down, it has enormous potential to address problems effectively. Since the eighteenth century it has been less the absence of feudalism than the presence of democracy—albeit imperfect, contested, and constricted but nevertheless slowly expanding—that has distinguished the United States from other nations, and that difference has shrunk as democracy has spread. It is democracy that now makes America attractive to nations shaking themselves free from bonds of other kinds.⁴² During the last fifty years varieties of liberal democratic polities and mixed economies have become the rule rather than the exception in the developed world and prototypes for developing nations eager to enjoy more stable politics and to share the richer nations' prosperity. "Democracy will come into its own," Dewey predicted, "for democracy is a name for a life of free and enriching communion. It had its seer in Walt Whitman."⁴³

We know too much now, both about the stubborn persistence of inequality in America and about America's unsettling tendency to assert its will globally, to share entirely Whitman's indomitable optimism, but we can at least attempt to recover the vibrant sense of democratic possibility that infused his *Democratic Vistas*, written in the bleak days after the Civil War:

America, filling the present with greatest deeds and problems, cheerfully accepting the past, including feudalism (as, indeed, the present is but the legitimate birth of the past, including feudalism,) counts, as I reckon, for her justification and success (for who, as yet, dare claim success?) almost entirely on the future. Nor is that hope unwarranted. To-day, ahead, though dimly yet, we see, in vistas, a copious, sane, gigantic offspring. For our New World I consider far less important for what it has done, or what it is, than for results to come. Sole among nationalities, these States have assumed the task to put in forms of lasting power and practicality, on areas of amplitude rivaling the operations of the physical kosmos, the moral political speculations of ages, long, long deferr'd, the democratic republican principle, and the theory of development and perfection by voluntary standards, and self-reliance.⁴⁴

From the perspective of 2010, it is not the sober-minded Hartz but the democratic "seer" Whitman who appears the more reliable guide to and the shrewder analyst of American culture. Those who seek to understand the dynamics of liberal democracy in American history would do well to keep both of their perspectives in view.

NOTES

1. For testimony concerning Hartz's genius in the classroom, see the essays by Benjamin Barber and Paul Roazen in a volume consisting of Hartz's lectures that have been painstakingly pieced together by his former students: Louis Hartz, *The Necessity of Choice: Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Paul Roazen, with a preface by Benjamin Barber (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1990).

2. One still finds that lofty assessment of *LTA* as "the greatest book ever written about the American political tradition" repeated in odd places, such as in the opening paragraph of a book devoted to a thinker not even mentioned by Hartz, and whose life and writings stand as a direct challenge to everything about Hartz's argument: Bob Pepperman Taylor, *America's Bachelor Uncle: Thoreau and the American Polity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 1.

3. In a passage that expresses the spirit of her critical comments about *LTA*, Shklar later wrote, "I do not treat [American political thought] as a peculiarly local phenomenon, 'a poor thing but our own,' but as intrinsically significant. Apart from the early establishment of representative democracy and the persistence of slavery, which do give it a special character, American political thought is just an integral part of modern history as a whole." Judith Shklar, "A Life of Learning," in *Liberalism without Illusions*, ed. Bernard Yack (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1996), 277. Conversations with Shklar about Hartz, and about his approach to American political culture in *LTA*, helped me formulate several of the principal arguments in this essay.

4. This scholarship is large and growing rapidly. Instructive examples of the institutional and disciplinary analysis of mid-twentieth-century social science include S. M. Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Robert Adcock, Mark Bevir, and Shannon C. Stimson, eds., *Modern Political Science: Anglo-American Exchanges since 1880* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 7, *The Modern Social Sciences*, ed. Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); David Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele, and Michael Latham, eds., *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Joel Isaac, "Theories of Knowledge and the American Human Sciences, 1920–1960" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 2005); Isaac, "The Human Sciences in Cold War America," *Historical Journal* 50 (2007): 725–746; Duncan Bell, *Political Thought and International Relations: Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Bell, "Writing the World: Disciplinary History and Beyond," *International Affairs*, forthcoming; and Richard Tuck, *Free Riding* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

5. Examples of the cross-fertilization of history and political science include Byron E. Shafer and Anthony J. Badger, eds., *Contesting Democracy: Substance and Structure in American Political History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001); and Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003). This essay draws on my contribution to that volume, "From Hartz to Tocqueville: Shifting the Focus from Liberalism to Democracy in America," 350–380.

6. Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World/Harvest, 1955), 20. All further page references, noted in parentheses in the text, are to this edition.

7. The reconsideration of Locke that emphasized the importance of his religious convictions began with Peter Laslett's introduction to his edition of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) and matured with John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the "Two Treatises of Government"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). For an especially helpful account of Locke's "worldly asceticism," which enabled him to take seriously both his commitment to Protestantism and his commitment to property, which enabled Americans such as Thomas Jefferson and John Adams to take Locke seriously, and which distinguishes the historical Locke decisively from the one-dimensional, liberty-and-property-obsessed Locke of Hartz's account, see Joshua Foa Dienstag, "Serving God and Mammon: The Lockean Sympathy in Early American Thought," *American Political Science Review* 90 (1996): 497–511; and Dienstag, "Between History and Nature: Social Contract Theory

in Locke and the Founders," *Journal of Politics* 58 (1996): 985–1009. For a more recent account developing these themes, see Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

8. Reviews of Hartz, *LTA*, by George Mowry, *American Historical Review* 61 (1955): 140–141; Arthur Mann, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 12 (1955): 653–655; Ralph Henry Gabriel, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17 (1956): 136–138; and Marvin Meyers, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (1963–1964): 261–268.

9. Paul Roazen, introduction to Hartz, *The Necessity of Choice*, 8.

10. Louis Hartz, "Comment," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5 (1963–1964): 279–284.

11. Leonard Krieger, review of *The Liberal Tradition in America*, *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 5 (1963–1964): 269–273. Hartz had attempted to preempt this criticism in *LTA*, 26–27, by pointing out how little intra-European comparative history had been done. Krieger was not persuaded.

12. Adrienne Koch, review of *The Liberal Tradition in America*, by Louis Hartz, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (1955): 550–552.

13. Louis Hartz, "Reply," in *Failure of a Dream? Essays in the History of American Socialism*, ed. John H. M. Laslett and Seymour Martin Lipset, rev. ed. (1974; reprint, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 357–361. For Kenneth McNaught's critique of *LTA*, which emphasizes the significance of class divisions and democratic reform movements in American history, see *Failure of a Dream*, 345–356.

14. Roazen, introduction to Hartz, *The Necessity of Choice*, 20.

15. For evidence of the centrality of race and gender in contemporary scholarship, see, for example, three of the most widely read and celebrated works of the closing years of the twentieth century: Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997); Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1998); and Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998).

16. On the paradoxical consequences of this dynamic for our understanding of America's "liberal tradition" as a cultural phenomenon distinct from its Christian origins, see David A. Hollinger, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), esp. chaps. 2, 3, and 8. Hartz could be an acute analyst of religion and its critics. In *The Necessity of Choice*, chap. 2, he brilliantly examined the eighteenth-century French philosophes' reliance on a standard of "nature" rather than "science" once they realized that a thoroughgoing empiricism would require them to take seriously the religious experience of French Catholics. Whereas a similar insight drove William James, committed to a radical empiricism, to examine in detail the varieties of religious experience, Hartz, for reasons not altogether clear, chose instead simply to dismiss the political significance of religion in America. For antidotes,

see the essays in Mark A. Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), and *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

17. David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 245. See more generally Hall, "Narrating Puritanism," in *New Directions in American Religious History*, ed. Harry Stout and D. G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 51–83; and Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York: Norton, 1995). For a fuller exposition of my argument concerning the role of religion in American political culture, see James T. Kloppenberg, "Knowledge and Belief in American Public Life," in *The Virtues of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 38–58.

18. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday/Anchor, 1969), 509, 511.

19. *Ibid.*, 508, 511.

20. *Ibid.*, 512. For my understanding of Tocqueville and discussion of the various uses American scholars and politicians have made of his work, see James T. Kloppenberg, "Life Everlasting: Tocqueville in America," in *The Virtues of Liberalism*, 71–81, "The Canvas and the Color: Tocqueville's Philosophical History and Why It Matters Now," *Modern Intellectual History* 3 (2006): 495–521, and "Tocqueville, Mill, and the American Gentry," *La Revue Tocqueville/The Tocqueville Review* 27, no. 2 (2006): 351–379.

21. Richard J. Ellis, *American Political Cultures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 151. This spirited book can be read as an extended essay devoted to demonstrating, in considerable detail, the inadequacy of Hartz's argument in *LTA*. Readers still persuaded by Hartz's interpretation should read *American Political Cultures*, which examines more fully many of the shortcomings in *LTA* that I can only highlight briefly here.

22. For a strikingly different interpretation emphasizing the genuinely democratic and revolutionary achievements of the American Revolution, likewise examined in a comparative framework, see the still rewarding masterpiece by R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 2 vols. (1959; reprint, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 1: 185–235.

23. John Adams quoted in Joseph J. Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams* (New York: Norton, 1993), 136; Samuel Adams quoted in Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (New York: Norton, 1969), 407. On the distance separating John Adams in particular from Hartz's notion of a liberal tradition, see the penetrating essay by John P. Diggins, "Knowledge and Sorrows: Louis Hartz's Quarrel with American History," *Political Theory* 16 (1988): 355–376. For recent studies establishing the founders' commitment to democratic procedures and challenging the idea that they should be seen as champions either of atomistic liberalism or of classical republicanism, see especially Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995); Bernard Bailyn,

Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence (New York: Knopf, 1990); Robert E. Shalhope, *The Roots of Democracy: American Thought and Culture, 1760–1800* (Boston: Twayne, 1990); Gordon Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: Penguin, 2006); and Akhil Amar, *America's Constitution: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2005).

24. Cf. Louis Hartz, *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought: Pennsylvania, 1776–1860* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948); Oscar Handlin and Mary Flug Handlin, *Commonwealth: A Study of the Role of Government in the American Economy: Massachusetts, 1774–1861* (New York: New York University Press, 1947; rev. ed., Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969); and William J. Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), esp. 1–18, 84–88, 284–285. A common response to Novak's head-on challenge to the prevailing wisdom of American economic and legal historians is simple incredulity. Like the mountain of evidence for the language of republicanism that Gordon Wood presented in *The Creation of the American Republic*, however, Novak's evidence cannot be dismissed or explained away so easily; only extensive further research will confirm or challenge his interpretation. For a wealth of evidence further disputing Hartz's portrait of an uncomplicated, triumphant liberal ethos, presented within an explicitly comparative framework, see the fine essays in Peter Becker, Jürgen Heideking, and James Henretta, eds., *Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German States, 1750–1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

25. Elizabeth B. Clark, "The Sacred Rights of the Weak: Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 463–493. For other portraits of antebellum American culture utterly irreconcilable with Hartz's, see Thomas L. Haskell's "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility" and "Convention and Hegemonic Interest in the Debate over Antislavery: A Reply to Davis and Ashworth," in *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Thomas J. Bender (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 107–160, 200–260; Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005); and Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

26. In John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), see esp. chap. 4. I am grateful to William Novak for reminding me of this point.

27. Recent studies emphasizing these themes include William Lee Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2002); Ronald C. White Jr., *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002); and Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Hartz's remarkable power as teacher and interpreter is apparent in the brilliant work of J. David Greenstone, whose analysis in *The Lincoln*

Persuasion: Remaking American Liberalism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993) shows the inadequacy of Hartz's "liberal tradition." Greenstone's admiration for his teacher Hartz prevented him from admitting that his own compelling analysis of the "bipolarity" of American political thought, which he thought was overcome by Lincoln and by some later Progressive reformers as well, was incompatible with Hartz's argument in *LTA*.

28. On these issues, see Michael Vorenberg, "Bringing the Constitution Back In: Amendment, Innovation, and Popular Democracy during the Civil War Era," in Jacobs, Novak, and Zelizer, *The Democratic Experiment*, 120–145; and Sven Beckert, "Democracy and Its Discontents," *Past and Present* 174 (2002): 116–157.

29. I have tried to make clear the similarities as well as the differences between these American and European theorists and reformers in *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870–1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). A more recent interpretation that places progressivism in a trans-Atlantic context is Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). An excellent study of progressive thought that emphasizes its ethical and religious dimensions is Eldon Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994).

30. On the origin, development, and fate of these ideas, the light they cast on American politics, and historians' dismissal of their importance, see James T. Kloppenberg, "Deliberative Democracy and the Problem of Poverty in America," in *The Virtues of Liberalism*, 100–123; and Cass Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights: FDR's Unfinished Revolution and Why We Need It More than Ever* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

31. Claus Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984); George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman, eds., *The Social Construction of Democracy, 1870–1990* (New York: New York University Press, 1995). See also Stein Ringen, *The Possibility of Politics: A Study in the Political Economy of the Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press/Clarendon Press, 1987); and Abram de Swaan, *In Care of the State: Health Care, Education and Welfare in Europe and the USA in the Modern Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

32. See Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); and the essays in Bruce Schulman and Julian Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

33. Noah Webster to Oliver Wolcott Jr., June 23, 1800, quoted by Joanne Freeman, "Explaining the Unexplainable: The Cultural Context of the Sedition Act," in Jacobs, Novak, and Zelizer, *The Democratic Experiment*, 28.

34. Robert Adcock and Mark Bevir accurately characterize the writing of Hartz and contemporaries such as Carl Friedrich and Leo Strauss as "epic." See Adcock and Bevir, "The Remaking of Political Theory," in Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson, *Modern Political Science*, 209–233. I have addressed Strauss's writings in James T. Kloppenberg, "The Place of Value in a Culture of Facts: Truth and Historicism," in

The Humanities and the Dynamics of Inclusion since World War II, ed. David A. Hollinger (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 126–158.

35. Louis Hartz, "Democracy: Image and Reality," in *Democracy Today*, ed. William N. Chambers and Robert H. Salisbury (St. Louis, Mo.: Washington University Press, 1960), 13–29.

36. Thomas L. Haskell, "Taking Exception to Exceptionalism," *Reviews in American History* 28 (2000): 151–166. See also the contributions to this debate in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

37. See Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964); on Hartz's final work, *A Synthesis of World History*, which he had printed privately in Europe before his death, see the gentle but nevertheless devastating assessment by Hartz's former student Patrick Riley, "Louis Hartz: The Final Years, the Unknown Work," *Political Theory* 16 (1988): 377–399. The passage quoted appears on page 383 of Riley's essay.

38. Hartz, *The Necessity of Choice*, 178; see also Roazen's discussion of this issue in the introduction to that volume: "If, as Hartz believed, philosophizing exists only where there is fundamental social conflict, it is no wonder that American political thought, compared to what happened in Europe, never succeeded in getting off the ground" (5).

39. Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994); Jeffrey Friedman, ed., *The Rational Choice Controversy: Economic Models of Politics Reconsidered* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1996), which includes voices on all sides of the debate over rational choice; William H. Riker, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1962), viii. For a wide-ranging and thoughtful discussion of these issues, see Rogers Smith, "Science, Non-Science, and Politics," in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J. McDonald (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 119–159. Two comprehensive histories of the profession of political science are David M. Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984); and Raymond Seidelman and Edward J. Harpham, *Disenchanted Realists: Political Science and the American Crisis, 1884–1984* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985). For more recent studies that pay close attention to institutional dynamics, see the works discussed in note 4 above.

40. Donald J. Lutz, *A Preface to American Political Theory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

41. John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace, 1941–1960* (New York: Norton, 1988), 255–256.

42. This is of course not the first time the United States has played such a paradoxical role, to the disgust and dismay of American dissenters, who have understandably questioned whether the nation should be seen as a symbol of democratic

promise. To cite just one example, Woodrow Wilson, although himself a racist and an imperialist, inspired democratic or anticolonialist movements in Egypt, India, China, Korea, and Indochina by proclaiming the principle of self-determination of peoples. See Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Trygve Throntveit, "The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination," unpublished manuscript, Harvard University.

43. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), in his *Later Works*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 2, 1925–1927 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 350. See also Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 552.

44. Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (based on essays written for the *Galaxy* in 1867; originally published in 1871), in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 929.