More than 'Irritable Mental Gestures': Russell Kirk's Challenge to Liberalism, 1950–1960

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Philosophically, Kirk wrote, liberalism lacked staying power.

Liberalism "is now fading out of the world," Russell Kirk proclaimed in 1955 in the liberal Catholic periodical *Commonweal*. "And I believe that the ephemeral character of the liberal movement is in consequence of the fact that liberalism's mythical roots always were feeble, and now are nearly dead." For Kirk, and many Christian Humanists of the twentieth century, liberalism had been an evanescent philosophy. It had taken for granted the virtues from the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions without recognizing their historical or cultural prerequisites, and it had envisioned society as beginning in a social contract. Neither practice, thought Kirk, could give a liberalism any real staying power. Therefore, he argued, "Liberalism is expiring under our very eyes for lack of the higher imagination."[1] For Kirk, it would be hard to find something more damning to write. Without imagination, Kirk noted in his many writings, the person and civilization became barren and meaningless, a wasteland of the inhumane and the corrupt. "The modern 'liberal' world, as I have come to understand it," Kirk wrote in *The New York Times* in 1956, "is making its way straight toward what C. S. Lewis calls 'the abolition of

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[1] Russell Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," *Commonweal* (January 7, 1955): 374.

man'—toward a society devoid of reverence, variety and the higher imagination, in which 'everyone belongs to everyone else,' in which there is collectivism without community, equality without love." Most liberals, Kirk continued, want each man, woman, and child to "submit to a regime of life in death, a colorless mediocrity and monotony in society, an emptiness of heart, a poverty of imagination."[2]

Scholars usually credit Kirk with beginning—or, at the very least, playing a significant role in creating—the post-World War II conservative movement. Rarely, however, do scholars acknowledge that, for him to discover, identify, and explain the conservative tradition in the Anglo-American world, he had to labor vigorously to dismantle liberalism as a historical, cultural, theological, practical, philosophical, and political theory. Indeed, from 1950 to 1960, Kirk challenged what he perceived to be a liberal hegemony in government, education, and the media. Lionel Trilling had argued as much when he wrote in 1950, "liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" in the United States. Some conservative opposition exists, Trilling continued, but its proponents are inarticulate and can "express themselves" only through "irritable mental gestures."[3] Kirk offered more than such gestures when he wrote about what he perceived to be the follies of liberalism in a wide range of academic and popular publications including *Commonweal*, *America*, *The Review of Politics*, the *New York Times*, *Confluence*, *Measure*, and the *South Atlantic Quarterly*. He wrestled with liberalism; however, his manner remained dogmatic rather than systematic. Additionally, Kirk's rhetoric changed dramatically from article to article. Sometimes he would lambast liberalism in general. "[E]ven when bullying became actual maltreatment, and thousands of American citizens of Japanese descent were thrown into 'relocation centers,' without any charges against them," Kirk brutally asked in 1953, "how many liberals protested?" When the liberals speak of liberties, he continued, they really mean "friendliness toward the rights of collectivists" and "absolute freedom for 'liberals' of their own kind."[4] In a similar piece published two years later, Kirk argued—along with George Santayana—that "the only

[2] Kirk, "The Aim of the Conservative is to Keep the Best in Life," *New York Times* (March 4, 1956), p. SM6.

[3] Trilling quoted in George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Tradition in America* (1976; Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 1996), 51.

[4] Kirk, "Conformity and Legislative Committees," *Confluence* 3 (1953): 344, 349.

tie which he [the liberal] would loosen is the marriage bond."[5] Yet, on other occasions, Kirk might praise a "Christian" and "principled" liberal or liberalism. Perhaps for Kirk the model liberal was Reinhold Niebuhr, the leader of the neo-orthodoxy movement. "Although Dr. Niebuhr's articles for popular periodicals continue politically 'liberal,' his books grow increasingly conservative," Kirk wrote in his 1956 book *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice*. Perhaps, Kirk mused, "many people retain the political tags of their earlier days," while "their real principles may be something else."[6] As explored in great detail toward the end of this present essay, Kirk also found much to admire in the liberalism of Friedrich Hayek and Wilhelm Röpke.

Kirk offered a fascinating critique of liberalism, sometimes sweeping in its denunciations but on other occasions as balanced as those put forth by two of his most important Christian Humanist contemporaries and influences, T. S. Eliot and Christopher Dawson.[7] This article attempts to find a coherent argument in Kirk's understanding of liberalism by focusing on his critiques of three foundational liberals—perhaps the beginnings of a hagiography (or demonology, depending upon one's point of view) of liberalism—John Locke, Jeremy Bentham, and Friedrich Hayek. In the end, though, Kirk chose Wilhelm Röpke, a Swiss economist, as the model liberal. As Kirk is one of the most important founders of modern intellectual conservatism, his first decade of vigorous writing is significant. Indeed, the decade of the 1950s might have represented consensus and conformity, but Kirk's critique of liberalism sparked dissent and profoundly shaped the thought of the political New Right as it emerged from the actions and speeches of Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan in the 1960s and came to fruition in the "Reagan Revolution" of the 1980s.

Ultimately, Kirk argued, if the adherents of liberalism fought for "justice," "order," "liberty," and a transcendent morality, they would find purpose and again give meaning to liberalism. If they failed in this endeavor, they might well "bring to society only a

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[5] Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," 376.

[6] Kirk, *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice: Essays of a Social Critic* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1956), 25 and 25fn.

[7] Kirk also praised the work of Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin. See, for example, Kirk, "Conservatism: The Shield of Liberalism," *The Catholic World* 189 (1959): 381. Neither Strauss nor Voegelin was a Christian Humanist, and I have, therefore, left them out of this discussion.

dreary monotony" or, even worse, "a society which would deny men the right to struggle against evil for the sake of good, or which simply ceased to distinguish between good and evil, [and] would constitute that domination of the Anti-Christ."[8] For Kirk, then, liberalism was good only if it embraced a proper understanding of the human person as complex, mysterious, and dignified. Any scholar or writer—liberal or otherwise—must recognize each person as marred by sin, but also as uniquely endowed with certain gifts and abilities and born in a certain time and place.[9] This is what Kirk called the principle of "proliferating variety."[10] Each person, Kirk argued, is a new and singular finite reflection of the Infinite. Here Kirk anticipated many of the writings of Vatican II.[11]

Kirk: Conservatism Defined and Personified

Kirk was an eccentric figure to be sure. He was an historian, a literary biographer, a political biographer, a best-selling novelist, a social critic and essayist, a defender of academic freedom, an economist, an advisor to presidents and presidential candidates, an Augustinian, a Stoic, a Christian Humanist, a convinced believer in ghosts, a nationally known debater and lecturer, a traditionalist, an environmental conservationist, a Justice of the Peace, and, perhaps above all, in his own personal life, truly charitable. He was labeled, among other things, "the American Cicero," the "Sage of Mecosta" (Mecosta is Kirk's ancestral town in central Michigan), and the "Wizard of Mecosta."[12]

Most importantly, though, for the purposes of this article, historians and other scholars typically give Kirk credit for being a key founder of the modern conservative intellectual, cultural, and political movements.[13] In doing so, they focus on Kirk's ha-

[8] Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," 377; and Kirk,"The Aim of the Conservative," SM6.

[9] Kirk, *A Program for Conservatives*, 225-250.

[10] Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 8.

[11] See, for example, sections 41-46 of "Lumen Gentium."

[12] For excellent assessments of Kirk's place in twentieth-century intellectual thought, see James E. Person, Jr., *Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1999); Henry Regnery, *Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979); and Gleaves Whitney, "Seven Things You Should Know about Russell Kirk: The Origins of the Modern Conservative Movement in the U.S.," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 63 (June 1997): 507-11.

[13] See, for example, Roland Story and Bruce Laurie's recent *The Rise of*

giographic defense of conservative thinkers since the Anglo-Irish statesman Edmund Burke and on what he called his "prolonged essay in definition" of conservatism in his 1953 magnum opus, *The Conservative Mind*.[14] Kirk argued that six tenets held conservatism together: (1) "Belief that a divine intent rules society as well as conscience, forging an eternal chain of right and duty which links great and obscure, living and dead"; (2) "affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life"; (3) "conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes"; (4) "persuasion that property and freedom are inexorably connected"; (5) "faith in prescription and distrust of 'sophisters and calculators'"; and (6) "recognition that change and reform are not identical."[15] Kirk offered almost nothing in *The Conservative Mind* about defense policy, economic policy, or educational policy. Instead, he created a list of conservative venerables—those who had somehow tapped into aspects of timeless truths, as he reckoned it—from Edmund Burke through George Santayana. In his definition of conservatism, the poetic, literary, and theological superseded the political. As Kirk, echoing Irving Babbitt, wrote near the beginning of *The Conservative Mind*, "political problems, at bottom, are religious and moral problems."[16]

The Conservative Mind, whether it created the modern conservative intellectual movement or not, disrupted the bland cultural and political conformity of the 1950s. Well over fifty serious American and British periodicals reviewed it. *Time Magazine* even gave the book its entire book review section in its July 4th issue of 1953.[17] Three years later, *Time* credited Kirk with being one of America's fifteen most important intellectual leaders, alongside such public luminaries as George Kennan, Paul Tillich, Walter Lippmann, and Robert Oppenheimer.[18] A year earlier, the *New York Times*

Conservatism in America, 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents (Boston: St. Martin's, 2008), 9, 46-47; the standard work on post-World War II conservatism, George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 68-77 and passim; and the standard biography of Kirk, Person, *Russell Kirk*, 34-54. See also, Gerald Russello, *The Post-Modern Imagination of Russell Kirk* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007).

[14] Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Santayana* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 3.

[15] Kirk, *Conservative Mind*, 7-8.

[16] Kirk, *Conservative Mind*, 7.

[17] "Generation to Generation," *Time* (July 6, 1953), 88-92.

[18] "Parnassus, Coast to Coast," *Time* (June 11, 1956), 65ff.

expressed enthusiasm for Kirk when the young "man of letters" from Michigan announced the creation of a conservative journal, soon to be known as *Modern Age*. "We wish him well," the *Times* wrote, "not because we are so wildly conservative but because we think Mr. Kirk is a thoughtful man with scruples. . . . We plan to hang around a while and listen."[19]

John Locke

The major Christian humanists of the twentieth century attempted to locate the beginnings of modern liberalism. Ancient Western liberalism, of course, had been synonymous with nonworldly wisdom, with being liberated from the things of this world. But, post-Renaissance liberalism seemed to be much different. It sought, or so many argued, to liberate one from institutions. English historian Christopher Dawson, who dramatically shaped Russell Kirk's views of history, identified Protestantism as the root of liberalism.[20] Significantly, he believed the Reformation overturned the medieval understanding of natural community and authority. The medieval had stressed *opus Dei*, the work of God. In this view, all things were gifts from God, and all of man's creations were gifts back to God, promoting the wellbeing of the natural and organic elements of society, the family, the church, and the local community. Community itself reflected the Natural Law and God's wishes; thus, by observing Creation and accepting Grace, man attempted to order the world in the most Godly fashion possible after the Fall. "Each order has its function, in the life of the whole; each has a necessary and God-given work to perform," Dawson argued. This does not, however, lead to utilitarianism, one group or class existing for the benefit of another. Instead, "all alike co-operate in their common service of God and His Church."[21]

Protestantism opened door to western secularization.

As a revolt against tradition and authority, the Protestant Reformation, especially Calvinism, unintentionally opened the door to western secularization and economic individualism. Led by the rising middle classes in England and the Netherlands, Protestantism stressed the need for economic individualism rather than the

[19] Harvey Breit, "In and Out of Books," *New York Times* (November 27, 1955): 324.

[20] On Dawson's influence on Kirk, see Kirk, "The High Achievement of Christopher Dawson," *Chesterton Review* 10 (1984): 435-438.

[21] Christopher Dawson, "Catholicism and Economics," *Blackfriars* (1924): 96.

wellbeing of the commonwealth. The rising middle classes, as the classical economists of the eighteenth century would later explain in academic terms, argued that the wellbeing of the community could only result from the individual pursuit of profit, "self-interest, properly understood." The riches of the few would trickle down to the masses. With laissez faire in Northern Europe, the old world of tradition and communal protection of the aged and indigent withered. According to Dawson,

> It was an age of ruin and decay for the peasants and the yeomen and the free craftsmen: it was the age of the enclosures of the commons and the destruction of the guilds; it abandoned the traditional Christian attitude to the poor and substituted a harsher doctrine which regarded poverty as the result of sloth or improvidence and charity as a form of self-indulgence. It makes self-interest a law of nature which was providentially designed to serve the good of the whole so that the love of money was transformed from the root of all evil to the mainspring of social life.[22]

For Dawson, it seems, the justification of the avarice of the individual was the greatest accomplishment of liberalism.

Though a Protestant in the 1950s, Kirk feared "private judgment."

Though Kirk proudly identified himself as a Protestant in the 1950s, he seemingly feared what John Henry Cardinal Newman identified as "private judgment," inherent in most forms of Protestantism.[23] "In religion and in politics, the essence of Liberalism is private judgment," Kirk argued in *The Conservative Mind*. "And to Newman, who venerated authority, judgment of grave questions according to the impudent and fallible dictates of one's own petty personal understanding was an act of flagrant impiety, approaching diabolic possession, the sin of spiritual pride."[24] Ultimately, Kirk argued, private judgment could only lead to the worship of the self, rather than the giving of one's self for family and community. By focusing on the supremacy of the autonomous and profit-making individual, liberalism seemingly subjects all judgments to private desires and thoughts rather than to Truth. "Liberalism then is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it," Newman argued in his *Apologia*, "and of claiming to determine on

[22] Dawson, "The Historic Origins of Liberalism," *The Review of Politics* 16 (1954): 270-71.

[23] In 1954, Kirk wrote, "I confess that I myself am a product of 'the dissidence of dissent, and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion.'" See his *Program for Conservatives* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954), 100.

[24] Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 251.

intrinsic grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word."[25] Private conscience, the ultimate "God-term" for the liberals, as Newman argued, is only one of several authorities. It must be balanced with scripture, the Magisterium, and Antiquity.[26] Like all heresies, Dawson believed, liberalism focuses on one truth, exaggerating its importance, while excluding numerous other truths. Christianity has little to do with individualism, Dawson wrote. "It was in origin a religion of order and solidarity."[27] And, Kirk elaborated: "In truth, any professor who attempted to indoctrinate his students in *both* Christianity and individualism would be hopelessly inconsistent; for individualism is anti-Christian." Therefore, Kirk continued, "it is possible logically to be a Christian, and possible logically to be an individualist; it is not possible to be the two simultaneously."[28]

"Individualism is anti-Christian."

One can find the real source of liberalism, according to Kirk, in Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*. The philosopher of the so-called "Glorious Revolution of 1688" and 1689 redefined western political society. For Locke, the world began not with the Creator making His creation, but with an amorphous "state of nature," which Kirk believed to be liberalism's feeble mythical beginning. Even more importantly, this nominal Anglican moved even farther away than Machiavelli had from the traditional Platonic-Aristotelian-Augustinian-Thomist attempt to make virtue the basis of the good society. Indeed, whereas Machiavelli at least acknowledged a God and then dismissed Him, Locke just dismissed God and His sacred law in his own thought. Locke argued that society is no longer about a sublime covenant between God and the people of God, but a compact between insecure property-rights bearers who desire little more than worldly security and prosperity. "There is no warmth in Locke, and no sense of consecration," Kirk wrote in 1955. "His social compact is a far cry from the words of Genesis, 'I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.'"[29] To protect one's self

"There is no warmth in Locke, and no sense of consecration."

[25] John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (London: Penguin, 1994), 254.

[26] Newman, *Apologia*, 256.

[27] Dawson, "The End of an Age," *Criterion* (1930): 399.

[28] Russell Kirk, *Academic Freedom: An Essay in Definition* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), 121.

[29] Kirk, "John Locke Reconsidered," *The Month* 14 (November 1955): 297.

For Locke, society formed not for the common good but for individual benefit and profit.

and one's material acquisitions becomes the goal of civil society, and property rights define us and our neighbors. Rather than being created in the Image of God, man, in Locke's view, becomes merely *homo economicus*, and men form society not for the sake of the common good or the will of God, but for individual benefit and profit. "Utility, not love, is the motive of Locke's individualism," Kirk claimed.[30] Finally, Locke believed that man is merely a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate. Rather than possessing a soul with the natural law written on his heart, as St. Paul had assured the Romans, man is born ready to be molded by society. Rather than being a "little word," made in the image of *the* Word, man becomes, in Locke's understanding, five senses and a reasonable mind. Locke developed this line of thinking most fully in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which, Kirk argued, was a "weapon, especially for employment against the Catholics, whose fortresses of Authority and Tradition must tremble before it." [31]

Regardless of its origins, the Christian Humanists of the twentieth century agreed, liberalism had reshaped much of the western world. Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century, little of traditional Western, Christian culture—beyond the Protestant Americans and the Lutheran and Catholic peasants of Europe—remained religious. The dominant political philosophy of that century, liberalism, "retained the inherited moral standards and values of a Christian civilization," Dawson explained. "But as Liberalism did not create these moral ideals, so, too, it cannot preserve them."[32] It can create "only a dreary monotony" which inspires nothing more than boredom and the loss of virtue, Kirk contended.[33] Further, economic liberalism had "laid the foundations of the technological order in the new industrial society of the nineteenth century."[34] With free competition and the destruction of community norms, church moral standards, and the family, liberalism led directly to the rise of "the machine," a term the Christian Humanists employed frequently. The end result: "the individual has become a cog in the vast machinery of modern industrial life," Dawson wrote in

[30] Kirk, "John Locke Reconsidered," 297.

[31] Kirk, "John Locke Reconsidered," 300.

[32] Dawson, "The Real Issue," *Colosseum* 1 (1934): 20.

[33] Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," 377.

[34] Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education* (Steubenville, Oh.: Franciscan University Press, 1989), 195; and Dawson, "The Problem of Wealth," *The Spectator* (17 October 1931), 485-86.

1930. "He is the servant of the machine and his whole life tends to become mechanized."[35] He becomes nothing more than a tool. As England, especially, became the "workshop of the world," Dawson argued, "society was brought into a state of dependence on material and non-moral factors such as had not existed since the days of the slave dealers and publicans of the later Roman Empire."[36]

In his own thought, Kirk was especially taken with the Papal encyclicals on the consequences of liberal capitalism. "The most illuminating teaching in opposition to either" Manchesterian laissez-faire capitalism or Marxist materialism, Kirk argued in 1957, "is contained in the social encyclicals of the Popes."[37] As Pope Pius XI outlined it: "Free competition has destroyed itself; economic dictatorship has supplanted the free market; unbridled ambition for power has likewise succeeded greed for gain; all economic life has become tragically hard, inexorable, and cruel."[38] Two generations before, Pope Leo XIII had been equally direct: with the concentration of wealth in what amounts to little less than plutocracy, "a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself."[39]

Kirk, Dawson, and Eliot, following the leads of Leo XIII and Pius XI, did not equate freedom or the free society with liberalism or capitalism. Both isms were nothing more than false materialisms, simple heretical results of modernity, distorting the reality of God's Creation. And, in consequence, both "isms" dehumanized the person, making him less than he was made to be.

Both liberalism and capitalism dehumanized the person.

Jeremy Bentham

With John Henry Cardinal Newman, Kirk argued that the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham—utilitarianism—represented the culmination of liberal thought in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[40] In 1953, Kirk gave immense weight to the

[35] Dawson, "European Democracy and the New Economic Forces," *The Sociological Review* 22 (1930): 33.

[36] Dawson, "Catholicism and Economics," 169.

[37] Kirk, "Ideology and Political Economy," *America* (January 5, 1957): 390. Kirk quoted Pius XI approvingly in his article, "Social Justice and Mass Culture," *The Review of Politics* 16 (October 1954): 445-446.

[38] Pope Pius XI, "On the Reconstruction of the Social Order," May 15, 1931.

[39] Pope Leo XIII, "On Capital and Labor," May 15, 1891.

[40] See especially Newman's Propositions of Liberalism in *Apologia*, 259ff., and Kirk's "Mill's 'On Liberty' Reconsidered,' *National Review* (January 25, 1956): 23-24.

influence of Bentham on nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers. "[T]he abstractions of Bentham, reducing human beings to social atoms," Kirk explained, "are the principal source of modern designs for social alteration by fiat."[41] In 1957, Kirk argued that no real progress in economic thought could be found without first "emancipat[ing] us from the doctrinaire Benthamism that is in the mouths of the zealots both for 'capitalism' and 'socialism.'"[42] The struggle against Benthamism stood as "the Iliad of our woes," Kirk lamented.[43]

At base, utilitarianism argued for "the greatest good for the greatest number," words that even Edmund Burke had used. The difference between Burke and Bentham, though, came in their differing uses of "good." For Burke, "good" meant society's being ordered according to God and tradition, embracing the classical and Christian virtues and piety.[44] For Bentham, "good" referred to each individual's pursuit of his or her own "pleasure principle," what the modern or so-called neo-classical economists call "utility," or, in Chicago-school speak, "utils." Utilitarianism, Kirk wrote in 1957, is "founded upon the presumption that the real end of man, after all, is the production-consumption equation."[45] Ultimately, utilitarianism is anti-humane and "servile in essence."[46] Not surprisingly, Kirk argued, Bentham despised the old virtues as mere platitudes, and he believed the idea of sin to be the result of simple ignorance and not a "literal statement of fact."[47] Instead, he believed in a blanket uniformity of rules in politics and education. Uniformity for Bentham meant equality, abstract rights, and efficiency. As Kirk put it:

> National character, the immense variety of human motives, the power of passion in human affairs—these he omitted from his system; he radiated an absolute confidence in the human reason. Taking his own personality for the incarnation of humanity, he presumed that men have only to be shown how to solve the pleasure-and-pain

[41] Kirk, "The New Humanism of Political Economy," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 52 (1953): 181.

[42] Kirk, "Ideology and Political Economy," *America* (January 5, 1957): 389.

[43] Kirk, "The New Humanism of Political Economy," 196.

[44] Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 101. See, also, Kirk, "How Dead is Edmund Burke?", *Queen's Quarterly* 57 (1950): 160-171; and Kirk, "Burke and the Philosophy of Prescription," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14 (January 1953): 365-380.

[45] Kirk, "Ideology and Political Economy," 389.

[46] Kirk, "Ideology and Political Economy," 389.

[47] Kirk, *Program for Conservatives*, 14.

> equations, and they will be good; their interests will lead them to co-operation and diligence and peace.[48]

Bentham's ideal was the universalism of the Scholastics without God or Aristotelian intellectual rigor. The utilitarians all too easily substitute democracy for God, Kirk wrote, creating a heresy.[49] "When a political principle is cried up into a religion, as democracy has been," Kirk wrote, "then the religion must fight for its life."[50]

According to Dawson, "the colorless neutral phraseology of social utility and efficiency" of Bentham and others served merely as a "screen behind which mighty inhuman powers were marshalling their forces for the conquest of humanity." These powers, St. Paul warned, are the true rulers of the world. "These spiritual powers are the real actors behind the veil of events," Dawson continued. "They are invisible and apparently non-existent to the politician and the economist." They "decide the fate of nations."[51]

Like his twentieth-century followers, the eighteenth-century Edmund Burke had also rejected men such as Bentham and railed against the "sophisters, calculators, and economists" who sought to dismiss and destroy the moral imagination as little more than religious superstition. For Burke, one must trust tradition and "our breasts," not our brains, to preserve best "a rational and manly freedom."[52] Indeed, utilitarianism seemed to Burke to be more in line with the French Revolution than with traditional norms of Christendom. As Burke famously wrote:

> the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and

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[48] Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 100. See also the late twentieth-century communitarian critique of utilitarianism. See, for example, Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 500.

[49] Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," 374. See also Kirk, "Democracy Isn't Religion, but it Could Use Some," *Saturday Evening Post* (March 26, 1960): 10.

[50] Kirk "'King Demos': The Meaning of Democracy," *The Month* 13 (April 1955): 247.

[51] Dawson, "The Return to Christian Unity," unpublished mss., Harvard Theological Library, 15.

[52] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 123.

heroick enterprise is gone![53]

With the French Revolution man had indeed attempted apotheosis, and the results were nothing short of terrifying—they were C. S. Lewis's vision of an incarnate Hell in *That Hideous Strength*. Burke stated his loyalties bluntly: "All your sophisters cannot produce any thing better adapted to preserve a rational and manly freedom than the course that we have pursued, who have chosen our nature rather than our speculations, our breasts rather than our inventions."[54]

Liberalism prepares the way for its own negation.

Historically, then, liberalism has served only as a stepping stone "to the bitter end, whether that end be Communism or some alternative type of 'totalitarian' Secularism" such as a pagan nationalism.[55] Because liberalism maintains the inherited Christian system of morals, at least verbally, whatever totalitarianism comes after liberalism must completely eradicate any lingering Christianity. The various ideologies of the twentieth century took religious language and ideas as a part of their "transition" to a perfect society. Communists, for example, had their own form of liturgy and prayer in the meetings for children. They also spoke of fascists as "capitalist heretics." Similar examples abound in the French Revolution and the various Mexican revolutions—but especially after the Mexican revolution of 1917. Ultimately, T. S. Eliot argued, "Liberalism can prepare the way for that which is its own negation: the artificial, mechanized or brutalized control which is the desperate remedy for its chaos."[56]

Marxism, then, like utilitarianism, also springs forth from liberalism.[57] Pope Pius XI put it bluntly in 1931: "Let all remember that Liberalism is the father of this Socialism that is pervading morality and culture and that Bolshevism will be its heir."[58] Following the same train of thought, Kirk also believed that all purely economic liberalism must end in Marxian materialism. In 1953, he suggested

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[53] Quoted in Kirk, ed., *The Portable Conservative Reader* (New York: Penguin, 1982), 21.

[54] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 123.

[55] Dawson, "The Real Issue," *Colosseum* 1 (1934): 21; and Kirk, "Ideology and Political Economy," 389.

[56] Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (San Diego, Calif.: Harvest Books, 1973), 12. See also, Michael Oakeshott, "Rationalism in Politics," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, ed. Timothy Fuller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991), 141-43.

[57] Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 100.

[58] Pope Pius XI, "On the Reconstruction of the Social Order," May 15, 1931.

a connection. "Quite as eighteenth-century optimism, materialism, and humanitarianism were fitted by Marx into a system which might have surprised a good many of the *philosophes*," he wrote, "so nineteenth-century utilitarian and Manchesterian concepts were the ancestors (perhaps with a bend sinister) of mechanistic social planning."[59] Two years later, Kirk was willing to up the ante. "And the materialism of the Marxist is the only logical culmination of the materialism of the doctrinaire liberal," he concluded.[60] Ludwig von Mises, the celebrated libertarian economist, Kirk argued, "does not seem to differ much in his postulates about the nature of man from the views of modern orthodox Marxists," as each is a child of Bentham.[61] Indeed, Kirk feared, "Mises is the complete disciple of Jeremy Bentham, contemptuous of religious belief and social tradition, dedicated to pure efficiency." At the tenth anniversary meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society, Mises had even jokingly referred to himself as an "entrepreneurial Marxist."[62]

Utilitarianism the ancestor to mechanistic social planning.

Kirk foresaw significant problems with pervasive de-spiritualized materialism in the United States. First, it would create boredom. With all of the money in the world, Kirk lamented, "we uglify." While nineteenth-century Americans were guilty of destroying beauty, they were nothing as compared to post-World War II Americans, Kirk argued in 1960. "Our obsession with fast cars and our longing for the prestige of a suburban house have driven freeways remorselessly through a thousand living communities, destroying everything in their path; these appetites have drained leadership and money out of our cities, at the same time devouring the countryside through subdivisions, so that capitalistic America fulfills the prophecy of Marx that countryside and town must merge in one blur."[63] Men and women will seek purpose. If they find none in a culture which fails to nourish their mind, soul, and body, they will turn to something—however false—that promises them the truth. Surrounded by the destruction of the past and the beautiful, living in a vacuum in our aesthetic scapes, Kirk argued, the average man and woman will rebel "even though confusedly and irrationally, against the dreary domination of an existence

[59] Kirk, "The New Humanism of Political Economy," 180-81.

[60] Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," 376.

[61] Kirk, "Ideology and Political Economy," 389.

[62] Kirk, "Cultural Debris: Two Conferences and the Future of Our Civilization," *Modern Age* 2 (Spring 1958): 166.

[63] Kirk, "The Uninteresting Future," *Commonweal* (June 3, 1960): 247-48.

without roots in the past or harmony in the present."[64] In 1960, Kirk believed, America was witnessing "the triumph of technology and the death of imagination."[65]

Materialistic economism "grinding down the best men."

With a whole host of Christian Humanists in the middle part of the twentieth century, Kirk believed that Marxism is a collectivist liberalism devoid of any spiritual inheritance. It ignores even the religiously flawed humanism of utilitarianism. Capitalism and communism, then, are simply materialist. In this way of thinking, communism and capitalism become two sides of the same coin, each bastard children of the Renaissance and the unintended consequences of the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution. "Though Communism is the enemy of both Catholicism and of Capitalism," Dawson claimed, "it stands far nearer to Capitalism than to Catholicism."[66] Catholicism, inherently, is neither liberal nor materialist. Capitalism and communism, however, share in their materialism. Both "'capitalistic' specialization and 'socialistic' consolidation," Russell Kirk noted, are grinding down the best men, the men of tradition, "peasants, artisans, small traders, small and medium-sized businessmen, members of the free professions and trusty officials and leaders of the community."[67] This, Kirk lamented "is the future which 'capitalists' and 'socialists' and 'communists' all are arranging for us. It may be an efficient program. It is not a human program."[68] Freedom, the watchword of the liberals, "will diminish if all men become the servants of an economic structure to which there is no alternative for anyone," whether "the masters of the economy are state servants or the servants of private corporations."[69]

Friedrich Hayek and the Whig Inheritance

One of the most interesting intellectual and personal relationships Kirk experienced in his life was with Nobel-prize winning economist and social philosopher Friedrich August von Hayek. Hayek and Kirk each considered himself a descendant of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Whig traditions, and each espe-

[64] Kirk, "The Uninteresting Future," 249.
[65] Kirk, "The Uninteresting Future," 249.
[66] Dawson, "The Real Issue," *Colosseum* 1 (1934): 18.
[67] Kirk, *A Program for Conservatives*, 152.
[68] Kirk, *A Program for Conservatives*, 201.
[69] Kirk, "Ideology and Political Economy," 389.

cially held the great Anglo-Irish statesman Edmund Burke in high regard. And yet, despite their common heritage, Hayek considered himself an Old Whig, and most scholars have labeled him a "classical liberal." Kirk, though, fully embraced the term "conservative" and considered himself a Gothic Romantic or a "Bohemian Tory." One can readily place Hayek in the liberal tradition, as Kirk frequently did. Throughout his works, Hayek often referenced the great thinkers of the ancient world, especially Aristotle and Cicero. He also cited a number of other thinkers who helped develop the Whig and republican movements during the so-called "Glorious Revolution of 1688," including James Harrington, Algernon Sidney, and John Locke. And, finally, he discussed the great Whiggish intellectuals following 1688, including John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, James Madison, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Lord Acton. Hayek rightfully viewed himself in a line of succession with these profound social critics and philosophers.[70] Hayek had the right to consider himself a disciple of Burke, Kirk conceded, as "Burke's economic ideas were precisely those of Adam Smith, his contemporary and friend."[71]

In the 1950s, Kirk gave Hayek considerable attention in his own writings, and he wrote more about Hayek than he did about Locke and Bentham combined. While still in his thirties, Kirk challenged Hayek—then a senior scholar, renowned economist, and president of the Mont Pelerin Society—to a debate. From a historical standpoint, one should consider the Hayek-Kirk debate of 1957 as one of the most important and one of the most telling exchanges in twentieth-century non-leftist thought. It seems to have radically clarified the distinctions between traditionalist conservatism and libertarian conservatism, a tension that exists to this day in the American Right. John Davenport of *Fortune* magazine, for example, labeled their encounter a "famous confrontation." Prior to the meeting, Kirk expressed his eager anticipation of the event, writing to Felix Morley that he relished "a little debate with my friend F. A.

[70] This is not to imply that Hayek agreed fully with each thinker's beliefs. He took issue, for example, with Aristotle several times. See Friedrich A. Hayek, "The Results of Human Action but not of Human Design," chapter in Richard M. Ebeling, ed., *Austrian Economics: A Reader* (Hillsdale, Mich.: Hillsdale College Press, 1991), 134; and Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 48.

[71] Kirk, "The New Humanism of Political Economy," 187.

Hayek."[72] The famous publisher Henry Regnery remembered the encounter vividly in his memoirs:

> Hayek is the founder of the society, and was still its president when he gave his paper "Why I am Not a Conservative," at the 1957 meeting. Although neither *The Conservative Mind* nor Russell Kirk was specifically mentioned in the paper, it was obviously inspired by the success of Kirk's book and the influential position the ideas it set forth had attained. This is attested to by the fact that Kirk was invited to defend his position immediately afterward, which he did extemporaneously, without notes of any kind, and with great brilliance and effect. The encounter in an elegant Swiss hotel before a distinguished international audience between one of the most respected economists of the time, who had been honored by professorships at the universities of Vienna, London, and Chicago, and the young writer from Mecosta, Michigan, was a dramatic and memorable occasion. As a rather biased witness, I would not be prepared to say that the young man from Mecosta came out second best.[73]

Whether Kirk won the debate or not is immaterial for the purposes of this article. Certainly, from Kirk's standpoint, he had challenged a preeminent scholar, his ally on many things, but far enough away from his own thinking that clarification of the two positions was a necessity. Hayek, according to Kirk, had called "upon all faithful liberals to reject alliances with conservatives. For conservatives are timid, authoritarian, paternalistic, anti-democratic, anti-intellectual, illogical, mystical, and many other distressing things." If Hayek's published version of "Why I am Not a Conservative" resembles closely the paper of the same name that he gave at the 1957 meeting, he was quite hard on conservatives of Kirk's variety. "Conservatism is bound by the stock of ideas inherited at a given time," Hayek complained. "And since it does not really believe in the power of argument, its last resort is generally a claim to superior wisdom, based on some self-arrogated superior quality."[74] To be fair, Hayek did praise conservatives for their ability

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[72] Davenport quoted in Alan Ebenstein, *Friedrich Hayek: A Biography* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). See also Russell Kirk to Felix Morley, August 4, 1957, in the Felix Morley Papers, Box 17, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.

[73] Regnery, *Memoirs of a Dissident Publisher*, 159.

[74] Hayek, "Why I am Not a Conservative," reprinted in Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 404. Hayek was not alone in his fear of Kirk and the traditionalists defining the right. See, for example, Frank Meyer's critique of Kirk entitled "Collectivism Rebaptized," *The Freeman* (July 1955), 559ff., and the numerous and revealing letters between Meyer and Rose Wilder Lane (Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa). Kirk's ideas, Meyer claimed in his 1955 article, are "another guise for the collectivist spirit of the age"

to create and defend "spontaneously grown institutions such as language, law, morals, and conventions." But, their victories lay in the past. Today's conservatives, Hayek argued, "lack the courage to welcome the same undesigned change from which new tools of human endeavors will emerge."[75] With such words in the air, predominating the 1957 meeting of classical liberals, one can readily imagine why Kirk, the young traditionalist from the backwoods of Michigan, cherished this debate.

Belief that free markets will cure all ills ignores human fallibility.

As Kirk confessed in his report of the meeting, Hayek offered numerous platitudes and wishful thoughts. "There has never been a time when liberal ideals were fully realized," Hayek had claimed. The proponents of liberalism have recognized this and "look forward to further improvement of institutions."[76] This unending "progress" and evolution toward to the good, at least as Hayek expressed it, seemed dangerous and fallacious to Kirk. "Behind Mr. Hayek's chain of reasoning," he recorded, "seemed to lie the assumption that if only a perfectly free market economy could be established, all social problems would solve themselves in short order." This idea, Kirk noted, dismissed a proper notion of the human being as fallible and unreasonable at times. "This is very like saying that if only the Sermon on the Mount were universally obeyed, sin would vanish from among men. No doubt; but the Sermon on the Mount will not be universally obeyed until the end of all things earthly." The perfect free market, Kirk concluded, will be "nearly as difficult to attain."[77] One can never separate—with any real efficacy—the economic from the political or the moral. To do so is to diminish the complexity of human life.

(p. 562). On the Kirk–Meyer feud, see Kevin J. Smant, *Principles and Heresies: Frank S. Meyer and the Shaping of the American Conservative Movement* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2002). Even one of Kirk's allies, Whittaker Chambers, feared that Kirk's understanding of conservatism was limited. He called *The Conservative Mind* a "worthy master's thesis." But, he asked, "if you were a marine in a landing boat, would you wade up the seabeach at Tarawa for *that* conservative position? And neither would I." See Chambers, *Cold Friday* (New York: Random House, 1964), 221.

[75] Hayek, "Why I am Not a Conservative," 400.

[76] Hayek, "Why I am Not a Conservative," 399. Hayek even dedicated his book to "The unknown civilization that is growing in America." For the best defense of Hayek's principles, see James R. Otteson II's brilliant *Actual Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[77] Kirk, "Cultural Debris," 166. Kirk reported more favorably on the society five years later, after it had elected Wilhelm Röpke its president. See Kirk, "The Mt. Pelerin Society," *National Review* (October 21, 1961): 270.

Inherited morals, traditions, and the meaning and significance of the free exchange of ideas and their societal evolution were critical to the thought of each man. Kirk reveled, of course, in the things inherited from America's Western ancestors, and he distrusted change for the sake of change. His understanding of conservatism, at root, depended on a hagiography of conservatives, men who had tapped into timeless truths. The burden of proof concerning the necessity for change, Kirk thought, lay with those advocating "progress." This, precisely, is what worried Hayek. In his last book, published just before his death, Hayek would write: "Perhaps what many people mean in speaking of God is just a personification of that tradition of morals or values that keeps their community alive." Still, Hayek continued, "most people can conceive of abstract tradition only as a personal Will. If so, will they not be inclined to find this will 'in society' in an age in which more overt supernaturalisms are ruled out as superstitions?" And, then, Hayek becomes as apocalyptic as Kirk worrying about the domination of the anti-Christ. "On that question may rest the survival of our civilisation."[78]

On the surface, especially in hindsight regarding the 1950s, the two thinkers seem very similar. Each revered Burke, and each despised the totalitarian left. At the end of their lives, however, Kirk and Hayek resided in very different worlds of thought and, perhaps, had done so all along.

A Proper Liberal and a Proper Political Economy: Wilhelm Röpke

When the National Socialists of Germany annexed Austria on March 1, 1938, one of their first targets was Ludwig von Mises, of Jewish descent, who had accepted a position with Geneva's Graduate Institute for International Studies four years earlier. The night the Nazis arrived in Austria, they ransacked the apartment that Mises still had in Vienna. They missed Mises, but they confiscated the books and papers he had left behind in Vienna.[79]

Subsequently, at the beginning of World War II, the Swiss Christian Humanist economist Wilhelm Röpke showed his friend and guest Mises the public space that had been divided into garden

[78] Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 140.

[79] Israel M. Kirzner, *Ludwig von Mises* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2001), 12. Richard Ebeling is editing the papers the Nazis stole. See, Richard Ebeling, ed., *Selected Writings of Ludwig von Mises* 3 vols.(Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 2000).

plots, allowing the citizens of Geneva space to do their own gardening and grow food should the war bring scarcity. Mises, the story runs, "shook his head: 'A very inefficient way of producing foodstuffs!'" "But," Röpke responded, "perhaps a very efficient way of producing human happiness."[80]

Kirk loved retelling this story, and it does not take a huge leap of the imagination to understand why the young conservative found himself taken with the Swiss economist who labeled himself an "Ordo Liberal." Kirk considered Röpke to be "perhaps the greatest influence toward humanizing economic thought."[81] Much to Kirk's delight, Röpke seems to have read widely—including James Fenimore Cooper—and this allowed Röpke to view "man as a being of personality and soul rather than a mere consumer of goods."[82] Beginning in the 1930s, Röpke had advocated an economy on a humane scale, attempting to avoid what he called the "Cult of the Colossal," or what Kirk would call "the machine." Indeed, "the measure of the economy is man," Röpke noted. And, he continued, the "measure of man is his relationship to God."[83] Röpke advanced this argument in all of his works, and several found a receptive audience in America, especially the *Social Crisis of Our Time* (1948); *A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market* (1960); and *Against the Tide* (1969). In *A Humane Economy*, Röpke elaborated on this Christian Humanist argument. "The ultimate source of our civilization's disease is the spiritual and religious crisis which has overtaken all of us and which each must master for himself. Above all," Röpke continued, "man is *Homo religiosus*, and yet we have, for the past century, made the desperate attempt to get along without God, and in the place of God we have set up the cult of man."[84]

In opposition to the cults of the Colossal and of man, Röpke proposed the "third way." Pure competition, Röpke claimed, led to the unfree society, in which concentration of economic power—either by the state or by corporations—must be the result. There-

[80] Quoted in Kirk, *The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdman's, 1995), 205.

[81] Kirk, "Humane Political Economy," *Modern Age* 3 (Summer 1959): 226.

[82] Kirk, "The New Humanism of Political Economy," 182.

[83] Quoted in Bill Campbell, "Introduction," in Wilhelm Röpke, *The Social Crisis of Our Time* (1942; New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1992), xxiv. See, also, John Zmirak, *Wilhelm Röpke: Swiss Localist, Global Economist* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2001).

[84] Röpke, *A Humane Economy: The Social Framework of the Free Market* (1960; Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 1998), 8.

fore, in Röpke's thought, as well as in Kirk's, laissez faire tended to become as collectivist as socialism, but it did so in a slower and more benign fashion. Röpke's "third way" would promote free competition as well as self-sufficiency. It would take Switzerland as its model.

> Decentralization, promotion of smaller production and settlement units and of the sociologically healthy forms of life and work (after the model of the peasant and the artisan), legislation preventing the formation of monopolies and financial concentration (company law, patent law, bankruptcy law, anti-trust laws, &c.), strictest supervision of the market to safeguard fair play, development of new, non-proletarian forms of industry, reduction of all dimensions and conditions to the human mean . . . elimination of over-complicated methods of organization, specialization and division of labor, promotion of wide distribution of property.[85]

Röpke's third way relied upon a Western and Judeo-Christian understanding of tradition and morality. The end result, Röpke assumed, would be a community of artisans, farmers, and others self-sufficient and free to pursue their own gifts. Society, then, would rest on the humane life rather than on the machine over which it has no real control.

Kirk embraced Röpke's ideas with enthusiasm. The "third way," Kirk argued, would restore "property, function, and dignity to the mass of men." Röpke's ideas, Kirk thought, would restore order to our civilization and endow it with "reverence, manners, stability, and personal rights." Indeed, Röpke's "object is to restore liberty to men by promoting economic independence."[86] Such enthusiasm on Kirk's part makes the Mises-Röpke story even more telling. The debate, Kirk thought, came down to efficiency versus humanity. Any society that ignored the latter would soon have nothing but the former and the eradication of the latter. Consequently, in the hierarchy of economists Kirk wrote about, Mises failed, Hayek pointed in the right direction, and Röpke succeeded in giving "political economy an Aristotelian breadth and nobility of view."[87]

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[85] Röpke, *The Social Crisis of Our Time*, 179.

[86] Kirk, "The New Humanism of Political Economy," 192-93.

[87] Kirk, "The New Humanism of Political Economy," 196.

Conclusion

Though Kirk thought liberalism for the most part devoid of any real inheritance, taking some good aspects of Christianity and secularizing them, he did not believe liberalism would vanish entirely. It might very well remain in the world in some form or another. He worried that either collectivist materialism or individualist materialism or both would be the surviving branches of liberalism. Should these superficially competing materialist visions win out, Kirk feared, we would see the loss of real humanity.[88] To combat these possibilities, he wrote his numerous scholarly books and articles. But he also engaged the artistic culture by writing imaginative fiction. His first novel, *Old House of Fear*, even became a best seller.[89]

Despite his worries in the 1950s that the liberals held every aspect of Western society in their clutches, Kirk did find profoundly interesting allies in his attacks on liberalism, politically understood: Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, Bernard Iddings Bell, and Robert Nisbet, to name a few. In American history, the new Whig school, led by Douglas Adair, Caroline Robbins, and Trevor Colbourn, was challenging the Lockean liberal assumptions of the American founding at their deepest levels. In theology, C. S. Lewis was making great headway into American evangelical circles, and J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* was ready to move from a cult classic to one of the best-selling works of all time.

Despite Kirk's misgivings about liberalism, he feared its dissolution.

And yet, Kirk also openly feared "the dissolution of liberalism," which would leave a vacuum in society, a vacuum easily "filled by an intolerant radicalism of any description."[90] The solution, Kirk thought, could possibly be found in such men as Reinhold Niebuhr or Friedrich Hayek, each of whom was honest and intelligent. A proper conservatism, Kirk thought, might well give the power of imagination and a definite purpose—an end—to classical liberalism.[91] The proponents of the two schools of thought, Kirk hoped, could join together "to resist the fell spirit of collectivism."[92] The hope of that unification, the conservative sanctification of liberal-

[88] Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," 377; and Kirk, "Beyond the Dreams of Avarice," *Measure* 2 (December 1950): 26.

[89] On Kirk's fiction, see Bradley J. Birzer, "Conservative Gothic," *Crisis* (2005): 52-54.

[90] Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," 377.

[91] Kirk, "The New American Conservatism," 18.

[92] Kirk, "Cultural Debris," 167.

ism, could be found in the touchstone person of Edmund Burke. As Kirk explained: "True conservatism and true liberalism, both of which owe so much to Burke, may join once more and agree upon a social principle that regards man as a spiritual being, not simply as a functioning machine." What would the liberal learn from such an alliance? He would, Kirk thought, come to understand three things: that man is not purely an economic being; that a transcendent order exists; and that life has purpose well beyond economic self-interest. "Allotted the quantity of energy presently expended upon collectivistic designs, a humanistic political economy might save us yet," Kirk hoped. "Intelligent men's minds, it begins to appear, are almost ready to make the endeavor."[93] In the end, the right kind of liberal would look like Wilhelm Röpke, who looked very much like Kirk.

[93] Kirk, "The New Humanism of Political Economy," 196.