

grants are not only importing disease, but once here, are creating public health emergencies through such things as unregulated food businesses. An outbreak of *Brucella melitensis* infections stemming from unpasteurized goat cheese occurred in Texas in 1983. All 29 persons affected were Mexican immigrants: one person died, and 14 others were hospitalized. The cheese had been produced in Mexico and purchased from unlicensed vendors who sold it from their cars. Immigration officials responded by stepping up enforcement efforts and stopping the flow of unpasteurized products.

Then, in 2001, the same infection cropped up again—but from a different source. The Centers for Disease Control reported that 12 Mexicans in Winston-Salem, N.C. contracted listeriosis after eating homemade, unpasteurized cheese or “queso fresco” made in the U.S. by fellow Mexican immigrants. The cheese was unlabeled and sold door to door, out of car trunks, and in Latino grocery stores. Eleven of the 12 people infected were women, and 10 of the women were pregnant when infected. This resulted in five stillbirths, three premature deliveries, and two infected newborns. The eleventh woman was five months postpartum when she presented at a local hospital with meningitis caused by the listeriosis infection.

Similar incidents have been reported in California and other states. The California Department of Health Services contends with persistent outbreaks of lethal pathogens associated with the illegal harvesting and consumption of untested raw oysters. *Vibrio vulnificus* outbreaks have a fatality rate sometimes exceeding 50 percent; from 1983 to 1999, California recorded a 65 percent fatality rate. A three-year review for the Los Angeles area revealed that 94 percent of the patients were primarily Spanish speaking.

Third-World health conditions are

now prevalent in parts of the United States. There is leprosy in El Paso, and the disease has also been reported in San Diego; hepatitis is now rampant along the length of the southern border. There are 1,500 unincorporated neighborhoods in southern Texas, called *colonias*, which make the coldwater tenement seem upscale. Built of corrugated tin and scrap wood, generally without hot running water or paved roads, and ringed by open sewers, they spew raw sewage onto the ground or into ditches, which in turn spawns dengue fever outbreaks. Some *colonias* boast a hepatitis rate among children of nearly 50 percent.

The root of the problem is the failure of successive administrations adequately to stem the influx of illegal aliens. By not addressing this, America is importing the diseases of the Third World and putting its own citizens at risk.

Even now, 110 years of steady public health gains are being reversed, and unless we change course, the price America pays for not enforcing its laws will be measured in American lives. ■

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Straussians & Realists

Leo Strauss was not the wisest German refugee.

By Paul Gottfried

IN RECENT WEEKS articles have turned up in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Le Monde*, *Die Welt*, and *Boston Globe*, linking the neo-conservatives in the Bush administration to University of Chicago political theorist Leo Strauss (1899-1973). Apparently, many of those who now advocate American imperial hegemony and a global democratic ideology, e.g., Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Bill Kristol, Robert Kagan, and Abram Shulsky, studied with Strauss or with one of his academic disciples. There is a tie that binds, or so we are told, between this master and his well-placed apostles, and by examining Strauss's core ideas, one should be able to figure out the mentality of Bush's advisors. As someone who has devoted critical works, including a long chapter of a book, *The Search for Historical Meaning*, to Strauss's inter-

pretive approach, I think that such commentators as Seymour Hersh and James Atlas may be making too much of their discovery. The Cold-War liberal platitudes being examined, often infused with phrases that seem drawn from Marxist-Leninism, do not require Leo Strauss as an ultimate explanation. Indeed it is possible to understand these spokesmen for a neoconservative foreign policy and the neo-Wilsonianism to which they appeal without tracing either to a particular interpreter of ancient and modern texts.

But Strauss did help fortify sentiments that already animated his students. Unlike such disciples as Walter Berns and Harry Jaffa, Strauss had no demonstrable interest in the civil rights movement and, as a former sergeant in the German imperial army in the First World War, had none of the impassioned

Teutonophobia attached to his first-generation disciples. What attracted the followers were Strauss's outspoken Jewish nationalism, which his former student George Anastapolo has heroically criticized, his (sometimes ritualistic) paeans to American democracy, particularly in his Walgreen Lectures at the University of Chicago (1949), and his broadsides against moral relativism. In *What is Political Philosophy?* (1959), Strauss aims his fire at "historicism," the belief that historical circumstances determine values, which allegedly have no independent standing. The problem here is that these invectives are directed against straw men. It is hard to find historically minded thinkers who express the views that Strauss attributes to them. Those he castigates, e.g., Edmund Burke, Max Weber, and the legal scholar Hans Kelsen, either said something different from what is ascribed to them about the relation between history and values or simply did not mean what Strauss claims they said.

Strauss expounds what has been called the "doormat theory of the majority." "Political philosophers," a term popularized by Strauss that Aristotle would have rightly rejected (politics, Aristotle

who feel free to tell noble lies as well as hidden truths. It is also an excuse for inflicting on the dead the perspective of the interpreter. All intelligent people in the past, we are led to believe, were like the practitioners of Straussian analysis. If the dead could be brought back they, like their exegetes, would be jollying up the Christian Right and preaching homilies about "human rights." The thought that Straussians themselves are "relativists" has occurred to more than one of their critics; nonetheless, such a criticism may be misplaced. Both the German Jewish refugee, who became a passionate Zionist, and his predominantly Jewish students, who celebrate FDR and Harry Truman, have embodied a particular set of loyalties. What they have done is dress up these loyalties as American patriotism and self-evident truths, while condemning those who resist their sentiments as morally reprehensible.

One long-term reason that Straussians have had their way is that conservatives have generally not looked at what lies behind their rhetoric of conviction. This lack of curiosity goes back before the neoconservative takeover of the American Right—and even before

also traces the U.S. founding back to the atheistic materialism of John Locke, which he defends as being integral to American moral identity.

It may also be asked whether self-described moral relativists are culturally dangerous because of their relativism. What Straussians point to are dishonest leftists, who happily deconstruct traditional value-systems in order to impose their own. Traditionalists are involved in a cultural war—but not against relativists who treat all cultures, including Western Christian civilization, in the same way.

Significantly, another German refugee, Hans Morgenthau (1904-1980), who, like Strauss, taught at the New School for Social Research and the University of Chicago, articulated a position on international relations that is dramatically different from the one identified with the Straussians. Although Morgenthau characterized himself repeatedly as a "Burkean conservative," American movement conservatives have never treated him as one of their own. This is because Straussians, among others, have disparaged Morgenthau as a value-relativist, who presents "American democracy" as the ideology of a particular nation-state. It was his failure to highlight the universal validity of the American creed, plus his view of the Soviet Union as one of two powers in a bipolar struggle, that made this colleague of Strauss unpalatable to the Right. The conservative complaint about him that I heard in the Sixties was that Morgenthau was a "positivist" or "naturalist." Even more damningly, he wrote for the (pre-neoconservative) *New Republic*.

In point of fact, his books, starting with *Politics among Nations* (1947), are full of conservative notions. In *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* (1969), Morgenthau warns against the "missionaries of the American experiment," who are replicating Wilson's "cru-

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explained, was a non-philosophical, practical activity), present their thoughts in a coded fashion, to avoid censorship and to deceive those who might be corrupted by truth. A long-held Straussian distinction between the "esoteric" and "exoteric" meanings of a text is more than a bizarre, undemonstrated assumption common to Strauss's students. It is, according to Princeton political thinker Stephen Holmes, an expression of overweening arrogance from interpreters

the fear in recent decades of sounding anti-Semitic by criticizing the Straussians' fervent Zionism. Already in the Fifties conservative Christians, particularly Catholic and Anglo-Catholic Thomists, looked to Strauss as a champion against the specter of moral disintegration. Such hyperbole shows no awareness that Strauss ends up ascribing his skepticism to the ancients, for example by emphatically denying that Socrates and Plato believed in eternal forms. He

sade for universal democracy." It was this president who during and after the First World War looked upon American intervention "as the instrument through which America would achieve the purpose for which it was created: to bring the blessing of its own political system to all the world." Morgenthau did not hesitate to pronounce "Wilsonian globalism a curse in American foreign policy." In 1952 he issued the timely admonition: "Forget the crusading notion that any nation, however virtuous and powerful, can have the mission to make the world over in its image." And as early as *Politics among Nations*, he had mocked those whose "propensity for moral and philosophic abstractions has impeded the objective investigation of what other people want."

The commonest attack—perhaps most conspicuously stressed by Straussians—on Morgenthau's perspective is that it conceals an unjustified cynicism toward moral grievances that should offend our sense of decency. Morally decent people should be outraged by acts of mass murder or by the operation of concentration camps to brutalize political dissenters. What Morgenthau, George Kennan, and other political realists seem to be demanding is an American foreign policy that is morally blind.

Two observations: first, political realism is an explicit moral reaction against what realists consider a misguided approach to human relations. What these realists aspire to do is not banish human concerns from international affairs but keep ideological and apocalyptic enthusiasms out of statecraft. Thus in *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau looks back nostalgically to an aristocratic age, when sober gentlemen could deal with issues coolly, insulated from popular passions. In a democratic age, Morgenthau thought that "propaganda as an instrument of foreign policy is inevitable" but also "dangerous."

Second, and equally pertinent, Morgenthau did feel driven to deal positively with the moral aspect of statecraft. In *Dilemmas of Politics* (1958), he explains, "[M]oral principles can never be fully realized but must at best be approximated through the ever tempo-

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rary balance of interests." Moreover, "conservatives see in a system of checks and balances a universal principle for all pluralistic societies. It appeals to historic precedent rather than abstract principles and aims at the realization of the lesser evil rather than the absolute good." In what might have been an allusion to the Straussians, Morgenthau expresses the view that "political philosophy, to be fruitful, must make the Aristotelian distinction between what is ideally good and what is good under the circumstances." Indeed one cannot apply international law, according to Morgenthau, without presuming that "identical or complementary interests" among nations, however different they might be in other respects, are possible. Morgenthau contrasted the wicked but canny "power politician" Stalin, "who, unencumbered by considerations of ideological advantage, sought to restore and expand Russia's traditional sphere of power" to the obstinate Wilsonian, FDR. Instead of confronting Stalin with a statement of American geopolitical interest, Roosevelt "defended an abstract philosophic principle, incapable of realization under the circumstances."

There is much that may look worn about Morgenthau's conceptual framework, starting with his time-bound world of nation-states. For better or worse (and I do think it is for worse), the relatively stable order of territorially and cul-

turally discrete states that existed in 19th-century Europe is gone. And the imperial and ideological style of rule that Morgenthau deplored is now incarnated in the American empire and its neo-Wilsonian custodians. At least for the time being, neo-Wilsonians who alter-

nate global imperial tropes with Straussian and Zionist phrases are helping to guide—or confuse—the State Department, or so the national press indicates.

But does the conservative realist Morgenthau remain as relevant as the revolutionary disciples of Strauss? Perhaps he does, in signaling the limits of our present fixations. For it seems doubtful that a country can go on treating foreign relations simply as an extension of reigning buzzwords or of domestic social experiments. This from Walter McDougall, Andrew Bacevich, Robert Tucker, and James Kurth, all of whom have written on the folly of applying American social reforms internationally. World revolution and forced modernization may not be useful ideas on which to base even the foreign policy of a superpower. These are the ideas, however, observes the German newspaper *Die Welt*, that keep showing up in the Straussian agenda for the Bush presidency, which is certainly not about timeless truths. Invariably commentators who begin discussing the Straussians as revivers of classical wisdom end up by talking about their Trotskyism. Straussians in politics are global revolutionaries who hide behind restorationist language. ■

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[The In-Laws]

Married to the CIA

By Steve Sailer

MICHAEL DOUGLAS REPLACES Peter Falk and Albert Brooks takes over for Alan Arkin in "The In-Laws," a loose remake of the 1979 semi-classic comedy.

The first hour is one of the most consistently funny so far in 2003, although that's not saying too much during this fallow year for screen comedies. It doesn't deliver many huge laughs, but the chuckles come almost as fast as in a quality TV sit-com (not that there are as many of those as there were five years ago, either). The yuks aren't terribly novel or insightful, but quantity can be a form of quality.

Sadly, the new film abruptly runs out of jokes with a half hour to go. In contrast, the original built slowly to some memorable comic climaxes.

If you want to sell your screenplay, it's smart to frontload your best material like this, since busy studio executives can hardly be expected to read scripts all the way through. Audiences, however, tend to judge movies more by how they feel as they walk out of the theater, so this bodes poorly for the latest version's word-of-mouth.

Surprisingly, you can watch the two films back to back without getting bored because the renditions share almost nothing besides their general set-up. Arkin/Brooks is a medical professional whose daughter is marrying the son of

Falk/Douglas, who is either a top American secret agent or a con man or both. The extroverted spy lures the staid doctor into a crazed espionage adventure that threatens the big wedding.

It's really more of a spy spoof, but it's being advertised as a bridal flick because Americans love comedies with "wedding" in the title. Our culture has become so casual that nuptials provide one of the few remaining formal occasions that can make indignities and embarrassments so much funnier.

The new screenwriters Nat Mauldin and Ed Solomon chose to use almost no jokes from the original script by the distinguished funnyman Andrew Bergman (of "Blazing Saddles," "Fletch," and "The Freshman" fame). Bergman's script was so finely tuned to the personas of the lovable Falk and the volatile Arkin that almost none of the bits of business were transferable to the alpha-male Douglas and the neurotic Brooks.

"In-Laws" cultists can still crack each other up with just the three words Falk shouts at Arkin: "Serpentine, Shelly, serpentine!" But I couldn't explain why that's so funny in less time than it would take you to watch the movie. The best comedy defies summarization because the humor builds upon on all that went before.

Bergman wrote the spy role as an honesty-challenged variation on Falk's famous Lt. Columbo, the bumbling but resourceful everyman. In contrast, Michael Douglas radiates privilege and success, so Mauldin and Solomon made his character a super-competent CIA operative who enjoys his job as much as Donald Trump loves his. He's not as intriguing as Falk's character, but he fits Douglas better.

The other role wasn't fleshed out much beyond a blunt-spoken masculinity made mildly famous by Arkin's per-

fect comic timing, but Albert Brooks gave the 2003 writers a richer, quirkier target.

Brooks (whose real name is, and I'm not making this up, "Albert Einstein") has enjoyed a long career as a comic, actor, writer, and director, with 1991's "Defending Your Life" being perhaps the highlight. He might well have become a huge star if Woody Allen hadn't beaten him to the Jewish worrywart persona. What's distinctive about Brooks' shtick is his patented slow burn, but that would have worked better in the more deliberately paced 1979 movie.

Together, Douglas and Brooks generate decent screen chemistry, although they aren't in the class of their predecessors.

Other differences between the 1979 and 2003 films illustrate changes in American culture. For example, the spy now has a beautiful young sidekick so we can watch her beat up the other characters. Back in 1979, few imagined that scenes of pretty girls hurting people would ever appeal to more than a limited (indeed, fetishistic) audience, but they now seem to be an indispensable part of summer multiplex movies.

The bad guy in the first movie was General Garcia, the lunatic dictator of a banana republic. These days, fortunately, there aren't that many old-line *generalissimos* left in power. Plus, the only thing the new Hollywood dreads more than being insensitive to Hispanics is starring them in movies. (Witness the striking lack of Latinos in the otherwise super-multiethnic "Matrix Reloaded"). So, the updated villain is a crime boss from—you guessed it—the one nation we're perfectly free to laugh at nowadays: France.

Arkin played a rich dentist, but Brooks is a podiatrist, perhaps because there aren't many wealthy dentists left. By