

in the 1930's, with politicized psychiatry.

Author Tom Clancy brought the debate into focus in his 2003 work, *Sea of Fire*, by having his protagonist wonder aloud how a government can possibly stop somebody from, say, contaminating the money supply with botulism via an ATM machine or bringing water laced with acid onto a jetliner; he wonders whether such acts can be prevented by screening for potential psychopaths and sociopaths before they can act—indeed, before they are even born. The character's counterpart in the story speculates that such an effort on a massive scale might trigger a “moral gag reflex” in the public at large.

The goal of parent licensing, Westman insists, is noble: It would acknowledge—by government fiat, if necessary—the United Nations tenet that “all persons, including children, should be free from abuse, oppression, and rejection.” Westman assures us that only “a small percentage of parents would not qualify.”

Many of his colleagues go further, however, arguing that “society must move beyond the notion that children are the property of their biological parents.”

Eugenics has come full circle, from seeking to eliminate the feeble-minded, the criminally inclined, alcoholics, and schizophrenics to purging the more modern rejects—the hyperactive, the attention-challenged, the substance abuser, and a variety of so-called learning disabled—through “pro-active,” “reproductive counseling” in birth control, abortion, and sterilization.

Proponents of parent licensing such as David Lykken (whose 1995 book, *The Antisocial Personalities*, focuses on the biological susceptibility to sociopathy) admit a racial bias in the scheme to license parents in the 21st century. This, according to both Lykken and Gordon, is largely because of the high incidence of single parenthood (illegitimacy) among the black population. Lykken views single mothering as the primary exacerbating circumstance leading to full-blown sociopathy, which, he says, accounts for much of the difference in the crime rate between blacks and whites.

Most traditionalists would agree that illegitimacy has negative consequences for children, but Lykken's analysis is misleading. The increase of single parenthood over the past 30 years has indeed made parent licensing an easier sell, but it is not an entirely natural development: society

has positively condoned illegitimacy by removing the social stigma. Single blacks are a particularly easy target because their lower socioeconomic status makes them less able to fight parent licensing. Once the effort to target blacks for “parent malpractice” becomes pervasive, however, a backlash will occur among African-Americans who have made their way into the professional ranks and joined the upper-middle class. Once this outcry begins, the entire population will be caught up in the licensing web to avoid the taint of race. “Risk factors” will inevitably take on a political dimension, threatening freedom of thought.

Professor Gordon demonstrates experts' awareness of this eventuality when he cautions his colleagues against overzealousness, correctly citing examples such as the

Wenatchee (Washington State) and other harebrained prosecutions of parents or childcare workers for concocted allegations of child abuse, in which supposed experts and other professionals have brought the very concept of expertise into disrepute.

“One must,” he writes, “approach child protection as the goal of intervention with extreme caution,” lest it come under fire for being politically motivated:

Conservatives, recall, are already up in arms over sex education in schools, school questionnaires about home activities that ask about the contents of medicine cabinets, and other intrusions into family privacy that they have come to recognize, not without ample justification, as expanding beyond their original supposed intent.

With that statement, Gordon unwittingly nails the argument against parent licensing, whether he agrees with the conservative position or not. His observations above tell us, first, that school testing firms (staffed by behavioral psychologists) have always known full well that “test” questions and follow-up curricula significantly intrude into students' beliefs, contrary to their public statements otherwise, and, second, that these “educators” always knew they were on thin legal ice.

Like Drs. Kallmann, Erlenmeyer-Kimling, Boulding, Lykken, Allen, Wender, and Westman, dozens of eugenicists still

hold on, expressly or not, to the bold notion, first iterated by the serpent in Genesis, “Ye shall be as gods.” According to G.P. Smith,

Genetic planning and eugenic programming are more rational and humane alternatives to population regulation than death by famine and war. Genetic enhancement technologies and the scientific research undertaken to advance them should be viewed as . . . a tool for enhancing the health of a Nation's citizens by engineering man's genetic weaknesses out of the line of inheritance.

Such arrogance, coming down simultaneously with the new mass-mental-health-screening legislation euphemistically called the New Freedom Initiative, should activate Americans' “moral gag reflex” if, indeed, anything, at this point, can do so.

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## LIBERALISM

### Innocent Leftists

by James Moses

A recent film festival sponsored by Human Rights Watch at New York's Walter Reade Theater in Lincoln Center attracted the hard-core sandalistas of the Upper West Side, who filed in to watch—what else?—the Sandinistas and Contras in a cartoon of a Canadian documentary called *The World Stopped Watching*. The accompanying flyer asked, “What happens to a country's people when the media spotlight is turned off?”

Answer: Two American journalists who went to Managua, and into the hills in the 1980's, have seen Nicaragua's post-Ortega republic and find it sorely lacking. For starters, as the voice-over ominously intones, “11 of the 94 members of Nicaragua's National Assembly are former Contra military commanders.” Obviously, somebody had better do a little affirmative-actioning to boost the per-

centage of non-Contras above the 88-percent mark.

Throughout the film, a former *Newsweek* photographer and a *Boston Globe* reporter, who had been fired by that publication for "lack of objectivity" (the mind boggles!), are eager to revisit alleged Contra massacre sites but never even broach the subject of Sandinista repression of, say, the Miskito Indians of the Atlantic coast. Similarly, scenes from the archives of cheering mobs defying the Norteamericano Reagan administration in the main plaza of the capital are interspersed with a pick-up baseball game being played on the same spot in the late 90's.

Raucous leftism, good. Normality, bad.

Speaking of Reagan, maybe the audience was a bit lethargic that day, but the deceased 40th president appeared on camera twice and escaped unjeered. How quaint.

The program led off with a trip back to the bad old 70's—specifically, the South America of the 1970's. A documentary, first shown on French television, was the other part of the double bill: *Death Squads: The French School*, which purported to tell the story of French army officers, schooled in counterrevolutionary warfare in Indochina and Algeria, teach-

ing interrogation techniques to Argentines, Brazilians, and Chileans as well as Americans at Fort Bragg beginning in the early 1960's. A parade of villain-torturers is marched across the screen and, in many cases, interviewed: Gen. Paul Aussaresses, the eye-patched octogenarian who created a scandal by claiming in a book that Fourth Republic politicians, including François Mitterand, authorized his forces to use torture during the Battle of Algiers; assorted OAS militants; Manuel Contreras, chief of Pinochet's DINA; and, of course, *junta* leaders Pinochet and Videla themselves.

So, maybe the defenders of civilization against the Bolsheviks played rough and bent the rules. (And maybe Pinochet used his position to squirrel away millions of dollars into a personal account at the Riggs Bank of Washington, D.C.) Point taken. But where was the accompanying feature-length documentary (or even two-minute intro), "Death Squads: The School of the Montoneros," which could have recounted the countless executions of businessmen and officers, the daily bombings and kidnappings perpetrated by the revolutionary left in Argentina? The *Wall Street Journal* recently ran an article that discussed the work of Argentine political commentator Vicente

Massot:

In his book "Matar o Morir" ("To Kill or To Die"), published in 2003, [he] finds that from May 1973 to March 1976, when the military deposed Isabel Peron, there were 5,079 terrorist attacks. Mr. Massot puts the body count in that period over 400, including almost 100 civilians and union leaders, dozens of policemen, and hundreds of military officers.

To the left, military repression always occurred in a vacuum. Their side never did anything to provoke. Just witness the recent flap over the French government's decision, at long last, to extradite to Italy a member of the Armed Proletarians for Communism, Cesare Battisti, who murdered four people 25 years ago. *Libération* and a coterie of ex-Mitterand government officials, as well as the openly homosexual Socialist mayor of Paris, in a supreme example of radical chic, have all chimed in to preserve this rat's "right of asylum." Of course, they would be the first to call for Pinochet's extradition to Spain, or to anywhere else in the world, wouldn't they?

James Moses writes from New York City.

## *The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition*

by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary.

Dr. Fleming's alternative is rooted in "everyday life," the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.

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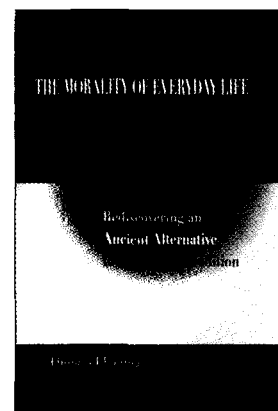
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## Fly Boy

From the late 1920's to the late 1950's, Howard Hughes seemed to own the world. Backed by the wealth of his father's patented oil-drill business, he moved from Houston to Los Angeles in 1925 at age 20 to indulge his two passions: aviation and movies. There, he became an upstart filmmaker who broke Hollywood's rules, producing films that exceeded normal budgets ten-times over and successfully flouting the censors with projects such as *Scarface* (1932) and *The Outlaw* (1943). At the same time, he was a champion pilot who broke speed records flying cross-country in 1936 and 1937 and then around-the-world in 1938. The public was abuzz with his accomplishments and pruriently intrigued by rumors that he enjoyed the favors of a floating harem of stars and starlets. By the late 40's, however, Hughes began to succumb to a weird congeries of phobias and obsessions, exacerbated by a massive addiction to codeine and Valium. As time went on, he increasingly isolated himself from the world behind a phalanx of creepy retainers who catered to his every childish whim, no matter how bizarre, unlawful, or depraved. At his command, this palace guard sealed his rooms with masking tape to fend off imagined bacterial assaults, bottled his urine and stored it in a closet, supplied him with limitless drugs, solicited teenage girls for his occasional pleasure, and much more. In the end, he was reduced to a 90-pound, six-foot-one wraith scribbling screeds of insanely detailed directions to his underlings on such matters as how to hang his clothing, squeeze his orange juice, and lift his toilet seat. Like Joseph Conrad's Mr. Kurtz lost in the Congo, Hughes lost his way traveling between his lairs in the fantastical worlds of Hollywood and Las Vegas. As the jungle had "whispered" to Kurtz, so America's vulgar, glittering wilderness had whispered to Hughes, telling him "things about himself which he did not know." As with Kurtz, "the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core."

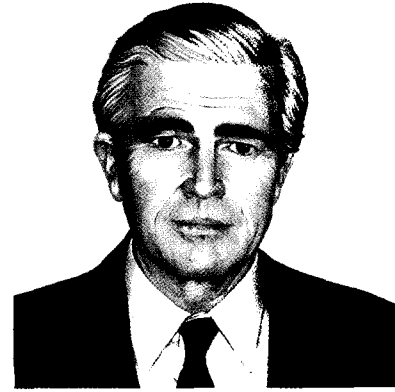
Many have claimed to understand the obsessive, narcissistic Hughes, but Alfred Hitchcock—no stranger to obses-

sion himself—got there first with a stroke of comic relief in *Vertigo* (1958), his otherwise somber meditation on romantic delusion. In the film's second scene, an ex-detective named Scottie (Jimmy Stewart) visits his friend Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes), a freelance artist. He is mildly startled to see a feminine undergarment positioned next to her studio drawing table. "What's this do-hickey, here?" he inquires. "It's a brassiere," she answers with amusement. "You know about those things. You're a big boy, now. It's brand new. Revolutionary uplift. No shoulder straps, no back straps, but does everything a brassiere should do. It works on the principle of the cantilever bridge. An aircraft engineer down the peninsula designed it. He worked it out in his spare time."

The unnamed engineer is, of course, Howard Hughes, who famously took time from designing flying machines to construct a high-tech brassiere for his protégé Jane Russell. He wanted to display her twin charms as prominently as possible in *The Outlaw*. This was the film, he promised his public with boyish drollery, that was going to "knock both your eyes out."

Besides making fun of Hughes, Hitchcock's brassiere scene advances *Vertigo*'s theme: the risks implicit in the way women collude with male sexual obsession, molding themselves physically and emotionally to satisfy men's romantic fantasies. Hitchcock shared such an obsession with Hughes, but, unlike the unreflective Texan, he understood it for what it was: an adolescent fixation that, indulged uncritically, inevitably led to disillusionment. Hughes' need to improve Russell's bosom, however, was symptomatic of more than this. It was of a piece with his compulsion to control everything and everyone around him. Seemingly incapable of irony, Hughes couldn't put his obsession into perspective. It may have been an early manifestation of what seems to have been a mental illness that eventually took over his life.

Martin Scorsese has cleverly smuggled Midge's drawing into *The Aviator*, his sweeping, astonishing, but incomplete rendering of Hughes' life. It's 1941, and



### *The Aviator*

Produced by Warner Bros.

and Miramax Films

Directed by Martin Scorsese

Screenplay by John Logan

Distributed by Warner Bros.

Hughes (Leonardo DiCaprio) has been dividing his time, as he so often did, between designing airplanes and "acquiring" starlets for his movies. At a meeting with his engineers, he holds up a drafting pad filled with drawings, all but one of them of airplane parts. The exception is a rendering of a woman in a strapless brassiere, an exact copy of the drawing Bel Geddes would show Stewart 17 years later in *Vertigo*. This cinematic anachronism is an inside joke that will amuse only a small portion of the audience. Nevertheless, you don't have to get the connection to get the point. By combining the mechanical with the human drawing, Scorsese and scriptwriter John Logan visually indicate Hughes' arrested psychological development. He approached people in the same utilitarian manner as he did machinery, with this difference: He was more comfortable with compliant machines than with willful human beings, especially women.

Scorsese repeatedly underscores Hughes' obsessive need to control his environment, the better to insulate himself from its supposed dangers. We first see Hughes in 1910, at five years old, being warned by his mother that he is not safe. He must defend himself against all manner of infections. This, we are to understand, is the beginning of his lifelong mission to erect barriers between himself and germs. In the next scene, we jump seven years ahead, and Hughes is directing his fourth film, *Hell's Angels*,