

Poverty: A Political History of the American Rich (2002). “[G]overnment power and preferment have been used by the rich, not shunned.”

In *Boiling Point* (1993), he wrote of the betrayal of the American middle class by their political leaders, but also of the dangers of “financialization,” “the cumulating influence of finance, government debt, unearned income, rentiers, overseas investment, domestic economic polarization, and social stratification,” all signals of a “broad national decline.”

In *Arrogant Capital* (1994), he wrote of the financial corruption of the republic. While ordinary Americans were on their own in the “new service economy,” big investors, speculators, and money managers who got into trouble could count on being rescued by the government through a policy of “financial mercantilism.” The 1989-92 bailout of the bankrupt savings-and-loan industry “was the biggest in America’s history,” costing the taxpayers \$250 billion. It saved the speculative economy.

In *American Theocracy* (2006), Phillips warned of the perils posed by radical religion, oil dependency, and borrowed money and predicted a coming “credit and financial collapse” in which “stock and home prices would . . . sink together.” Two policies adopted after the stock-market collapse and the 2000 recession made it inevitable: Bush’s tax cuts and spending increases, and Greenspan’s 13 successive interest-rate cuts. The effect “was to inflate a new real estate and credit bubble” even bigger than the NASDAQ one. *Bad Money* is all about the arrival of the long-delayed day of reckoning, the beginning of the “deleveraging of a giant two-decade build-up of debt and liquidity.”

Phillips wrongly identifies Joseph Schumpeter as a member of the Austrian School of economics, while never mentioning Ludwig von Mises or F.A. Hayek, whose theory of the business cycle has been vindicated yet again. I can understand why the paper pushers and the inflationists ignore these brilliant diagnosticians (because their prescription, re-anchoring

the dollar to precious metals, is anathema), but why has Phillips not bothered to get this right?

The magicians at the Fed and the Treasury may have prolonged an inflationary and speculative economy, but they cannot perpetuate it. They cannot conjure wealth out of paper. Nor can an empire continue to police the world on borrowed money, or a people trade “services” and debt for real goods. Real wealth consists in substantial capital (good houses, fertile land, workshops, factories, universities, libraries, works of art). The idea that “financialization” could replace manufacturing as the material foundation of national power and wealth is, as Phillips points out, an error previously made by Spain, Holland, and Britain. In our country this error goes back to Hamilton, who believed that government bonds were capital, when they were only government promises to extract capital from the productive economy. (So it is with finance in general. It is parasitic, not productive.) The fallacy has not been corrected. Instead, it has been extended to the magical market in financial derivatives (mortgage-backed securities, collateralized debt obligations, credit default swaps, etc.), which are nothing but glorified IOUs.

Americans are going to learn the hard way that they cannot continue to scorn the law of limitation. There is a limit to how much debt even a great empire can carry, as there is a limit to how much population and diversity a country can have before it collapses from within. Niall Ferguson observed in 2006 that the United States had become an “empire” which “expands by importing, not exporting people,” “to the tune of roughly 1.5 million newcomers a year.” That cannot continue indefinitely. Nor can the debt and the inflation, the self-indulgence and the boastful pride, or the arrogant denial. If the Panic of 2007-08 changes any of that, it will prove to have been a most fortunate occurrence.

Herbert Arthur Scott Trask is an historian who lives and writes in the Missouri River hill country west of St. Louis.

Man on Holiday

by Fr. Michael P. Orsi

Darwin Day in America: How Our Politics and Culture Have Been Dehumanized in the Name of Science

by John G. West

Wilmington, DE: ISI Books;
375 pp., \$28.00



John G. West is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, a nonpartisan public-policy think tank that conducts research on technology, science and culture, economics, and foreign affairs. The Institute’s Center for Science and Culture is notable for challenging various aspects of evolutionary theory—maintaining, for instance, that evolutionary biology has failed to answer many salient questions.

West’s primary thesis in *Darwin Day in America* is that our culture and politics have been dehumanized by a scientific materialism (or reductionism) that sees man merely as the sum of his parts, and that this dogma has taken over the educational system in the United States. He notes that anyone who questions Darwinian evolution—the central idea in this reductionist mind-set—is denounced by academia as a biblical fundamentalist or creationist, and therefore as antisience.

Two high-profile examples serve to make his point. The first is the 1997 Washington State case in which harassment and punitive measures were applied to Burlington-Edison High School biology teacher Roger De Hart. His crime was that he had asked his students to prepare arguments for either evolution or Intelligent Design. The second is the 2004 Pennsylvania case in which the Dover School Board required that students be informed of Intelligent Design as a possible alternative to Darwinism. In a suit alleging that this constituted the promotion of religion, the judge issued a scathing attack on ID and its proponents. His decision, as demonstrated by West, was copied directly from the handbook of

the ACLU. It not only misquoted ID theorists but displayed an animus toward religion and toward anyone who challenges evolution.

The title of this book references a movement in some schools and communities to replace Abraham Lincoln's birthday, February 12, with Darwin Day—the goal being “to build a Global Celebration of Science and Humanity that is intended to promote a common bond among all people of the earth.” West claims that this “bond” is based on scientific determinism and is being used to promote value-free ethics.

Despite the centrality of Darwinian evolution in modern science, West points out that there is actually scant evidence for one of its fundamental tenets, the gradual evolutionary change in species that Darwin himself postulated. In other words, no “missing link” has ever been found. Instead, science observes species making quantum leaps, with sudden and dramatic changes demonstrated by the fossil record.

Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that living things are more than mere energy and matter. Molecular biologists have discovered that the protein-building needed to produce new organisms requires a fundamental entity: information. In the case of man, West maintains that a need for information is reflected in “human choices and desires [which] are genuine entities that produce real effects.” All of this undermines biological determinism, because it is contrary to the Darwinian idea of “natural selection,” which is considered a random process.

These facts pose a fundamental challenge to evolution and, according to West, should open science to theories such as Intelligent Design, which asserts that features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, rather than by an undirected process.

West also explores the much-discussed concept of “social Darwinism,” charging that the idea of “the survival of the fittest” inherent in natural selection has promoted a “eugenic cul-

ture” in America, stressing a “mechanistic” approach to life and to the modification of human behavior. He points to value-free social-engineering techniques that have had a pervasive influence, affecting social-welfare programs, business and medical ethics, the criminal-justice system, and teaching about human sexuality in our schools. Among the most extreme manifestations of this “mechanistic” approach have been the forced sterilization of individuals deemed mentally deficient in an effort to “cleanse” the gene pool, and the use of pre-frontal lobotomy to regulate the behavior of criminals and the mentally ill, practices that flourished in the early part of the past century.

Disappointingly, West fails to connect social Darwinism to American pragmatism. Here the book is lacking, since it is the combination of materialistic science and value-free philosophy that has provided cultural legitimacy for so many of the most outrageous affronts to human dignity and served to translate them into law. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' statement in *Buck v. Bull* (1927), in which he condoned forced sterilization, is a prime example: “Three generations of imbeciles are enough.”

This link between Darwinism and pragmatism is also indicative of the widespread belief that there is no natural-law standard and that only man-made law is dispositive. Contemporary moral issues such as abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, hybrid embryos, cloning, and sex selection of babies, as well as the redefinition of life and even the determination of when death occurs, all grow out of this deadly combination of science and philosophy.

West is relentless in exposing the devastating effects of Darwinian atheism. He argues that any concept of the inherent dignity of a person based on the notion of man being made in God's image vanished in Darwin's second book, *The Descent of Man* (1871). That work depicted religion as a mere by-product of biology and the “inertia of cultural development,” redefining man and the ways in which men

should behave. West shows how the present attempt to place all sentient beings on an equal footing is reductionism in the extreme, providing the philosophical basis for a diminution of traditional virtue.

The result is especially obvious in the mechanistic teaching on human sexuality, an approach that reached its fullest flowering in the work of Alfred Kinsey, who continues to influence public-school sex-education programs more than a half-century after his death. The dominant understanding of sex encourages “tolerance” of all forms of sexual activity—premarital sex, homosexuality, bestiality, and more. It deludes society into believing that, according to the laws of science, anything goes, because this is natural for the human animal.

West does an excellent job showing how Darwinian science has cheapened human life and limited man's horizons. Yet his solution—teaching Intelligent Design—is somewhat limited itself, and is certainly one-dimensional. Understanding the grandeur of the human person requires philosophy and theology, which are essential for answering the deeper questions about man's origin, identity, and end.

Pope John Paul II, in his 1996 “Message to the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences on Evolution,” stated this need clearly:

The sciences observe, describe and measure . . . the many manifestations of life, and write them down along the time-line. The moment of passage into the spiritual realm is not something that can be observed in this way . . . But the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-consciousness and self-awareness, of moral conscience, of liberty, or of aesthetic and religious experience—these must be analyzed through philosophical reflection, while theology seeks to clarify the ultimate meaning of the Creator's designs.

While West gives the reader cause for concern, he fails to recommend

any answers to the question of how society can be engaged in a debate beyond Darwinism and ID. And West fails to explore how practices like private schooling, homeschooling, and church attendance may serve as an effective firewall to the Darwinian reductionism that infests our society.

This book demands a sequel.

Fr. Michael P. Orsi is chaplain and Research Fellow in Law and Religion at the Ave Maria Law School in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The Eternal Dog

by Ronald F. Maxwell

We Give Our Hearts to Dogs to Tear: Intimations of Their Immortality
by Alston Chase
Edison, NJ: Transaction;
235 pp., \$34.95



When Tibbie came into my life, I was already past my 40th year. After a few weeks I marveled how I had ever lived without a dog. As a first dog, this 14-pound West Highland terrier would set the standard for those to follow—kindhearted, gentle, loving, spirited, playful, patient, trusting, intelligent, obedient, mischievous, a beauty to watch, and a joy to snuggle with; but also strong willed, determined, and a born ratter. She and her pal Willie, also a Westie and six months her junior, would corner and kill many a field mouse at their various homes in California, Maryland, and Virginia. At nine years of age, she survived a coyote attack, but her life hung in the balance for 48 hours. When she recovered, she was the same old brave and loyal dog, and when she finally succumbed to cancer a week shy of 17, we still wanted to hold on to her. I will never be the same person for having known her and will keep her in my heart to my dying day.

For this reason, reading Alston

Chase's new book, *We Give Our Hearts to Dogs to Tear*, was a cathartic experience. Anyone who has shared his life with a dog knows the unique joy and intense grief inextricably bound up in the relationship. We console ourselves that the dogs, whose life spans are so much shorter than ours, at least don't have to endure our loss, the loss of their master, the primary focus of all their devotion, care, and affection.

Chase's book chronicles more than a quarter-century of a family's history with three main characters: the dogs, the humans, and the land. The dogs are mostly Jack Russell terriers, and as we get to know each one, from birth to death, sometimes slowly from disease, sometimes suddenly from a wild predator or a human vehicle, Chase uses their lives to reflect on the two-century history of the Jack Russell terrier in America and the British Isles.

The humans are the author, his wife, Diana, and individuals raising and caring for these dogs widely scattered across time and place. What emerges is a portrait of this particular type of dog, the hunting Jack Russell, and the people devoted to him or her. The land is Montana—in the late 70's, still a wild and rugged place. By the time the book closes in the first decade of the 21st century, the land has undergone much of the massive shrink-wrapping that is suffocating wild places and the quality of life outdoors everywhere. The Jack Russell is not a hothouse flower. He revels in the open space, the wildness, and even the danger. The more we watch him in Chase's narrative, the more we come to see ourselves. For we, human animals, also need these things to thrive.

Chase says it best:

No matter where we live or what we do, love of the land lies in our blood. For twelve millennia, dogs and people lived on the land, working, herding, defending, rescuing. And when, beginning two hundred years ago, people began moving to cities they yearned for the pastoral way of life all the more. They still do. Dogs preserve for us an emotional connection to our bucolic past that remains in memory and imagination. And when they demand we take them for walks, they reawaken this connection. They become guides in a journey to rediscover our own genetic roots.

I shouldn't have been surprised that woven throughout the narrative is an existential contemplation on eternity. Not surprised, because each time a dog leaves, as with the loss of a beloved human, we are forced to confront the unanswerable questions we spend most of our time ignoring. Finally then, this book is a philosophical memoir, a heart-rending meditation on the extraordinary mystery that is the bond between dog and man.

Immediately upon closing the book, I said a prayer for Tibbie, Willie, and Yum-Yum, who had recently been taken by a black bear—then settled down on the faded and much-abused oriental rug with Tobey, Doogie, Penelope, and Patou. They were waiting.

Ronald F. Maxwell is the director of several films, including Gods and Generals and the forthcoming Western, Belle Starr.

Purchase books, tapes, and CDs at

