

some self-proclaimed savior.

These difficulties do not justify the repressive legislation being advocated in some quarters. Bromley and Shupe are particularly concerned about conservatorship and guardianship bills, which were introduced in several states in 1981, and which would allow parents to gain legal custody over an adult child alleged to be encapsulated in an organization practicing mental coercion. Most bills of this nature are modeled after legislation sponsored by New York Assemblyman Howard Lasher, whose guardianship bill was passed by both houses of the New York legislature in 1980 and 1981 only to be vetoed by Governor Hugh Carey. Similar bills are being considered in several states this spring, and some are likely to be passed. The Lasher Bill would permit deprogramming once custody has been granted. In effect, the judicial and administrative processes of the state would be employed to induce persons to recant their faiths.

In *Strange Gods*, Bromley and Shupe have given us a perceptive and scrupulously balanced analysis of the controversy over cults, brainwashing, and deprogramming. However, they fall somewhat short of full sensitivity to the civil-liberties issue. Deprogramming, they affirm, is rational, even if it is coercive; it "depends on argument." Quite so; some young devotees cannot defend their beliefs in front of a hostile inquisitor, and allow themselves to be talked out of their commitment. But why should they be forced into a confrontation to defend their faith, as if faith had to be rational to deserve constitutional protection? The authors note that parents involved in coercive deprogramming "are basically motivated by love and concern for their children." But so are the parents who abduct their adult child because he is a homosexual or plans to marry someone with the wrong skin color. Recently, the Supreme Court let stand an appellate court decision allowing an abducted cultist to sue parents and deprogrammers under the civil-rights statutes, which the Court interpreted as protecting religious as well as racial minorities. This is merely a theoretical victory, since prejudiced juries may withhold awards. We can only hope that the pervasive concern with "saving the family" will not legitimate the kidnapping and imprisoning by parents of their nonconformist adult offspring. ■

**THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRATIC CAPITALISM, by Michael Novak. Simon and Schuster, 432 pp., \$17.50.**

## Conned by the neocons

GEORGE H. SMITH

**J**OHN PAUL II, ACCORDING to Nicholas von Hoffman, is a soft-core socialist. And this makes von Hoffman a happy man. Writing on "Papal Economics" in the *New Republic* last November, he provides a sympathetic account of the recent encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* ("On Human Work"). Von Hoffman points out that the pope is no believer in Reaganism (never mind that our intrepid journalist identifies Reagan and—would you believe it?—Jerry Falwell as champions of laissez faire; this slip pales in comparison with others) and he applauds John Paul II for his opposition to "unchecked and dangerous economic individualism." Then von Hoffman proceeds to unleash a torrent of clichés. The pope is a good economist because he bases his approach on *people* rather than *money*. The pope favors intelligent, creative planning instead of the abandonment of society to the impersonal, mechanistic forces of competition. And on and on it goes. Conservative pope and liberal journalist join hands in an orgy of economic ignorance.

Both men would do well to read Michael Novak's *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. Novak, Catholic defender of democratic socialism turned Catholic advocate of democratic capitalism, has written a remarkable book. It is remarkable not for its content (which, though often good, is largely an integration of previous free-market theory), but for its stated purpose. Novak seeks to establish the moral and cultural foundations of "democratic capitalism" and to show that capitalism, far from leading to spiritual impoverishment as religious critics often charge, actually promotes and

nourishes the values essential to the Christian tradition.

This theme has been set forth before, but usually by Protestant writers. With notable exceptions, such as Lord Acton and Hilaire Belloc, the libertarian vision has found few supporters among Catholic intellectuals, especially in recent years. Given the climate among Catholic theorists today, for a prominent member of that faith (and a former socialist to boot) to produce an articulate defense of human liberty—well, even David Hume might consider this adequate empirical evidence for miracles.

Unfortunately, Novak's conversion was not miraculous enough. It took him to neoconservatism rather than libertarianism. In his new book, we are warned against lapsing into a horror called "radical individualism," and we are assured that "democratic capitalism" is not identical with the free market; it is a market system "checked by a political system and a moral-cultural system." Not only does Novak wish to keep various features of the welfare state intact, but he regards the regulation of "international trade and internal competition" as compatible with his vision of democratic capitalism. Perhaps Hume wouldn't be so impressed after all.

This tension pervades the entire book. Novak praises the virtues of a free market—he even defends the profit motive and places corporate executives on the same creative level as artists and intellectuals. But intermingled with this hymn to the blessings of liberty is the ever-present political "check" on the alleged excesses of the marketplace. Thus does the defense of liberty die the death of a thousand qualifications (to borrow a phrase from Antony Flew).

This ideological confusion results from Novak's failure to delineate unambiguously the relationship between "democracy" and "capitalism." Democracy and capitalism have the same historical roots, according to Novak—they both developed as a means to limit the power of the state—and "the natural logic of capitalism leads to democracy." If there is truth in these assertions, it requires careful qualification. Some early defenders of the free market, like the Physiocrats, opposed democracy, whereas certain defenders of democracy, particularly the followers of Rousseau, have proved hostile to individual liberty. It would have been helpful if Novak had

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addressed the warnings of Tocqueville, Talmon, and others on the threat of totalitarian democracy.

Just what is this politico-economic system that Novak calls democratic capitalism? While the economic aspect is clearly enough a free market based on private property, Novak is less precise in explaining the democratic feature. Obviously he does not favor unlimited majority rule. Where, then, are the boundaries? Where are the moral limits beyond which the majority may not transgress? "Conscience," Novak contends, "is the taproot of democratic capitalism," so he is unwilling to sacrifice religious liberty to the demands of an intolerant majority. And he is more aware than most neoconservatives that liberty is cut from whole cloth. To section off one sphere of human liberty, like religion, as inviolate, while conceding that other areas, such as economic liberty, may be restricted for the "common good" if democratic procedure is followed, is to undercut the moral foundation of liberty and to endanger its future existence in all

justification and sanction. A theory of rights is needed to determine the limits of political authority, and it is a significant weakness of Novak's book that he fails to develop any such foundation. He does refer to rights favorably, but he neglects to provide an adequate defense of them or explain their role in his scheme of democratic capitalism.

**T**HESE DEFECTS HOWEVER, are far outweighed by the merits of the book, including lucid discussions and valuable insights reminiscent of F. A. Hayek. Novak's examination of the antimarket bias of Catholic theologians, and his reply to their objections, are especially noteworthy. Unlike von Hoffman, who sees enlightened progressivism in papal condemnations of the free market, Novak sees the residues of the feudal mentality and an abysmal ignorance of the most basic economics. He repeatedly calls attention to the moral and spiritual character of voluntary exchange, including money, the profit motive, and—yes—even

neoconservatives. But, contrary to enemy propaganda, libertarians have always recognized the need for moral underpinnings in a free society: the respect for individual rights. The real issue is whether the government should promote "virtue" in its citizens through coercive institutions and measures like public schools, prohibiting drugs, and regulating consensual sexual conduct.

Novak develops the theme of a spontaneous order in more detail than most neoconservatives, so he has more regard for individual liberty than many of his allies. Hence his book is refreshingly free of the usual neoconservative harangues about cracking down on pornography, drugs, prostitution, and other victimless crimes. He also seems to realize that a free society cultivates many of the values he cherishes. Judging by his insight that "the public enforcement of virtue" is more suited to socialism than to capitalism, and by his spirited defense of "cultural pluralism," Novak seems to veer to the libertarian side of this controversy.

Given his basic instincts—his background in the antiwar movement, his respect for civil liberties, his understanding of the moral significance of voluntary interaction—why does Novak remain in the neoconservative camp? Part of the reason, I suspect, lies in his misunderstanding of the libertarian tradition. His passing remarks about "radical individualism" recall the old charge that libertarians have an atomistic view of society and fail to appreciate the crucial role of association and communal bonds. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Libertarians have traditionally opposed state power because it pollutes and destroys the benefits of voluntary social relationships. Society vs. the State has been a persistent theme in the history of libertarian thought. But if Novak is misinformed, he has a lot of company. The myth of social "atomism" has haunted the image of radical individualism ever since historians antagonistic to individualism decided to write its history.

"The first of all moral obligations," writes Novak, "is to think clearly," and he appears determined to follow his own advice wherever it leads him. Clear thinking has convinced him that democratic socialism is "incoherent." A bit more of the same tonic should soon lead him out of the morass of neoconservatism as well. □

## ***A theory of rights is needed to determine the limits of political authority—Novak fails on this count.***

spheres. Novak's "democratic capitalism" is akin to "democratic religion," in which religious freedom is permitted up to the point where the majority, utilizing the democratic process, determines that a particular faith is contrary to the common good and must suffer the penalty of the law. Of course, Novak would not endorse this kind of democracy. Why then is he so enthralled by the idea of fettering the market by democratic controls?

Novak rests a good deal of his moral defense of democratic capitalism on the premise that it furthers the common good. His case is often convincing and elegant, drawing on such ideas as the "invisible hand," spontaneous order, and value pluralism. But the "common good" is a *consequence* of a free society; it does not provide a standard to prevent the incursions of majority rule on the rights of individuals and minorities. The common good, in other words, is the unintended result of liberty, not its moral

"big" business. As he puts it: "In this sense, a defense of the free market is, first, a defense of efficiency, productivity, inventiveness, and prosperity. It is also a defense of the free conscience—free not only in the realm of the spirit, and not only in politics, but also in the economic decisions of everyday life. It is, thirdly, a defense of the pluralist order of democratic capitalism against the unitary and commanded order of socialism."

If Novak embraces neoconservatism, he diverges from that school in a crucial respect. Neoconservatives typically stress the need for *virtue*, whereas libertarians stress the need for *liberty*, as a precondition of a prosperous social order. This is a question of priority that has plagued theorists for centuries. Novak seems uncertain which road to take. In his emphasis on moral and cultural values, and especially in his emphasis on the role of the family in a free society, Novak appears to side with the

**I'M DANCING AS FAST AS I CAN,**  
directed by Jack Hofsiss.

**DINER,** directed by Barry Levinson.

## Formula flicks

STEPHEN HARVEY

**B**ACK IN THE OLDEN DAYS—circa 1946—the Darryl Zanucks and Louis B. Mayers were often accused of strangling the performers they employed in a hammerlock of typecasting. It was always Linda Darnell pouting and sticking out her chest in costume romances and *films noirs*, Greer Garson dispensing gracious gentility in one storm-in-a-teacup after another. You'd think things would be different, now that big-league performers are free agents with the clout to shape their own screen destinies. But without any moguls left to pickle and preserve their star images, today's luminaries have simply gone out and done the job for themselves. There must be a clause stuck into every contract Jane Fonda signs, to insure that halfway through the script her character will undergo a heart transplant and a graft of conscience, so that she can emerge at the last fadeout as a caring and committed Human Being. Sissy Spacek is inevitably pale and frail but spunky and clean-hearted, whether those skim-milk eyes widen anxiously to focus on the sights of Nowhere, Texas, or Limbo, Latin America. And Marsha Mason's movie world, of course, is bounded on all four sides by Neil Simon.

Yet not even Mason inhabits a terri-

tory as claustrophobic as Jill Clayburgh's high-tech Independence Hall. For the last few years, Clayburgh has stepped briskly past vistas of New York and Chicago and Washington and Rome in variations of the same silk white-collar frock, as the Exemplar Of Our Age—the working-world achiever with the topsy-turvy private life. She's toiled in an art gallery, sung coloratura, solved arcane mathematical equations, and served on the Supreme Court, taking an occasional coffee break to ponder such spicy dilemmas as marital abandonment, incest, polyandry, and mere garden-variety sexism. Just like the sturdy ladies who adorn the pages of *Self* magazine, Clayburgh wouldn't be human if she didn't have a few shaky moments—*An Unmarried Woman* demonstrated that she's one of the most convincing barfers in the business, and in her current effort she transcends even that achievement. But mostly she's our Surrogate Coper—her public isn't expected to admire her acting so much as her symbolic potency, as she pulls herself up by the pantyhose and faces a better tomorrow as Her Own Person.

By now, a resumé for any Clayburgh vehicle must address just three basic questions: Which high-pressure glamour job does she hold this time? Does her lifestyle unfold in a loft, brownstone, or high-rise? and, What psychological roadblock is going to thwart her momentarily along the road to self-fulfillment? To these burning issues *I'm Dancing As Fast As I Can* replies as follows: (a) Emmy-winning producer of TV documentaries, (b) a one-bedroom apartment with minimalist white accessories in a prewar building on the Upper West Side, and (c) a dependence on Valium, complicated by unfinished business in her relationship with her late father, and the looming Nicol Williamson as her live-in boyfriend.

Director Jack Hofsiss shoves the camera up close on Clayburgh every time her face contorts into a beet-red rictus of anguish and degradation—this and the clutzy framing and fuzzy, denatured color are supposed to convey that what we're watching is an unflinching study of a harrowing con-

temporary malady. Then why does this movie come off as something like *Mommie Dearest* without the shoulder pads? Perhaps it's because the script by David Rabe (Clayburgh's husband and, like Hofsiss, a movie neophyte with a classy stage pedigree) is a series of screechily trilled high notes and no recitative. Everything is stripped away from this story save Clayburgh and her dilemma, and without any context for these twitches and tirades to reverberate off, she seems less victim than exhibitionist. This woman is all symptoms and no motivation; from the first time you see her, supervising the editing of her TV show about a middle-aged poet (Geraldine Page) dying of cancer, all Clayburgh does is ingest—wads of gum, packs of cigarettes, and pills, pills, pills, which she inhales like an upright Hoover. Her liaison with Williamson, he of the pink corrugated brow and sweaty sneer, is another baffling given, considering the utterly inert chemistry of their scenes together. The choice of this particular actor to play opposite her seems inspired by nothing but the wish to find someone even battier than the heroine—particularly after this fun couple have barricaded themselves inside their digs while she tries to kick tranquilizers—and Heaven knows Williamson fills that bill without half trying.

The subject of Clayburgh's documentary frequently accuses our heroine of being a narcoleptic narcissist, but it's rather hard to blame her for that, since in this movie's world there's so little to distract her from total absorption on Number One. No director seems to have shot her latest video opus—there's just Boss Lady and a clutter of yes-persons mumbling and taking notes. Apparently, nobody lives on the other side of the walls of the Clayburgh/Williamson ménage, since their constant chorus of sobs, socks, and screams doesn't elicit so much as a single thump of a broomstick against their sturdy plaster walls. The movie's refusal to let any sense of naturalistic texture upstage its heroine's travails reduces the work to an abstract display of its star's virtuosity. In one hilarious passage, Clayburgh mutters that she feels like a bar of soap, an inapt analogy if there ever was one, considering that while a bar of Camay is a hard, smooth, noiseless lump, Clayburgh does nothing but quiver and screech. A curious detachment sets in whenever the movie halts

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