# arts&letters

Reviewed by John Hospers

### Split Image

Almost a year ago a Canadian film, Ticket to Heaven, was released but was shown in only a few theaters in the United States. Its protagonist was a young man who, lacking assurance and independence of mind, became involved in a religious cult. Through the charismatic personality of cult leaders and the repeated chanting of slogans, the cult gradually transferred control of his mind and will from himself to the cult. His parents hired someone to kidnap him and forcibly deprogram him while he was locked up in a bedroom over a period of weeks.

Now an American film has appeared, Split Image, with an almost identical plot: the vague dissatisfaction with life, the emotional dependency on the approval of others, the psychological attraction of the cult, the quelling of doubts, the enforced rituals, the kidnaping, the deprogramming. The best scenes in Split Image are those involving actor Tames Woods (the killer in The Onion Field) as the determined deprogrammer, whose behavior induces revulsion but at the same time a certain grudging admiration for the effectiveness of his methods.

Split Image contains several powerful scenes, but it is no better than its much less publicized predecessor. The most dramatic part of the story, the deprogramming, is in fact more convincingly done in Ticket to Heaven than in Split Image. Example: when the new recruit in Ticket accompanies the seasoned veteran of the cult selling flowers on the street to raise money, he is told to say, "It's for our drug rehabilitation program." But after the sale the new recruit says, "But that's a lie-we don't have a drug program." The veteran smiles sympathetically: lying in the service of a good cause is all right. "That was Satan's moneywe just got it back again, to use for God." But how can God command lying and stealing? "Ah, you're doubting again-doubts come from Satan," and they kneel on the sidewalk together to pray that no more doubts shall cloud the mind of the new recruit. Later, during the deprogramming, it is these very

played upon to get the ex-recruit to reclaim his self-identity. In Split Image, by contrast, the means employed to deprogram are more physical than mental, and they carry less conviction. There is less emphasis than in the earlier film on getting the subject entrapped in his own inconsistencies, and hence the newer film misses an opportunity (fully exploited in the earlier one) to generate a unique tension and power. Both films, however, deal intelligently with the same subject, and both are eminently worthy of being seen.

### Inchon

In most respects Inchon is an extraordinarily bad film. The script contains more tired clichés than any other in recent memory. The dialogue would have seemed inane even in 1930. The plot-the part dealing with the personal lives of the participants, not the military operations—is simplistically contrived. Example: when a nice officer has both a wife and a mistress, and the background is war, you can be sure that one of the two will be killed before it's over, and predictably this happens. In real life, General Mac-Arthur, the central character in this film, was eloquent in speech and master of the bon mot; in this film, many of his pronouncements have been reduced to religious platitudes and remarks worthy of a functionally illiterate high school dropout. And Laurence Olivier as MacArthur has substituted for his British accent a form of American speech so flat and dreary that the real MacArthur would have retched at the sound of it.

Yet there are reasons for some people to see this film. Like another aesthetic turkey last year, Lion of the Desert, which dramatized to most audiences for the first time the horrors of the Italian invasion of Libya in the 1930s, this one tells the story (\$50 million worth, with no expenses spared) of the savage North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950 and culminates in a step-by-step presentation of the counterattack at Inchon by the UN forces, under virtually impossible conditions, to cut off the invader at the most strategic point. MacArthur's invasion plan was one of the most brilliant strategic moves in military history, and it is thoroughly detailed in this film.

This is a stridently anti-Communist film, and those critics who can forgive

doubts, never fully suppressed, that are the anti-Communism cannot forgive the stridency. Nor can they forgive the financing of the film by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, though it was done not as propaganda for his religious cult but as a cinematic record of the invasion of his country, lest the world forget that it ever happened. The ordinary viewer, who is quite indifferent to critical acclaim or condemnation, is not likely to forget it. It isn't as good as reading history, but it's something.

### **Sleeping Dogs**

Increasing numbers of citizens are unhappy with the current government. Some become revolutionaries and start shooting people down in the streets to replace the established order. The prime minister declares martial law in order to deal with the revolutionaries. But in doing so the government increasingly uses the same methods as the revolutionaries: some innocent people are shot; others are rounded up for interrogation and confinement without trial. Gradually the moral distinction between the two regimes becomes blurred. What is the individual to do who is caught between these conflicting forces, threatened by each with torture and death if he does not attempt to discover and disclose the secret plans of the other?

Sleeping Dogs is a minor but well-done political thriller from New Zealand that it would be easy, but unfortunate, to miss. It illustrates some of the recurring problems involved in political allegiance. If you need order through law, and the law or its methods of enforcement become more and more imperfect, should you go along with those who want to change it by force, including the use of methods of which you disapprove? And in the process, what happens to the revolutionaries themselves, who begin as idealists but end up as despots who would use any kind of terror to squelch those whom they oppose? The film shows dramatically why it is that violent revolution usually causes a regime that is semitotalitarian to be replaced by another that is totally totalitarian and how the ideals of even the most conscientious and nonaggressive people become corrupted by the methods they are made to use as they seek to institute changes.

John Hospers teaches philosophy at the University of Southern California.



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### ARTS&LETTERS

### LANGUAGE

### The Gingham Dog And the Calico Cat

By Richard Mitchell

For some reason, we have not convinced the vinced the rapidly multiplying proponents of the back-to-basics-with-the-Bible "education" movement that we are not on their side. What's wrong with us that we haven't figured out how to offend those usually truculent and combative enthusiasts? We have had no trouble in offending their mirror-image counterparts, the silly educationists, who hold exactly the same thematic belief-that knowledge and reason are not enoughand who "educate" by exactly the same method-the modification of behavior through persuasion addressed to the sentiments. The details don't matter where the principle is rotten.

One of those "Christian school" newsletters recently reprinted portions of a piece from the Underground Grammarian called "The Answering of Kautski," in which we considered similarities in educationism and bolshevism. We quoted Lenin's famous line about "teaching" the children and planting a seed that will never be uprooted. We also quoted (and the reprint did include) a much less familiar Leninism, saying that most people are not capable of thought, and all they need is "to learn the words."

The readers of the newsletter were presumably confirmed in righteousness by an essay linking what schools do to what Lenin said. It did not occur to them, apparently, that Luther, to whom Reason was just "the Devil's whore," also said as much and, in so saying, echoed whole choirs of orthodox theologians.

There is only one Education, and it has only one goal: the freedom of the mind. Anything that needs an adjective, be it civics education or socialist education or Christian education or whatever-you-like education, is not education, and it has some different goal. The very existence of modified "educations" is testimony to the fact that their proponents can not bring about what they want in a mind that is free. An "education" that can not do its work in a free mind, and so must "teach" by homily and precept in the service of these feelings and attitudes and beliefs rather than those, is pure and unmistakable tyranny. And it is exactly the kind of tyranny, "tyranny over the

mind of man," to which Thomas Jeffer-Reason is not the devil's whore. It is son swore "eternal enmity" on—on the whore's devil. To those who have sold what?-on "the altar of God."

wrote to a nephew:

Question with boldness even the existence of God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

No bolshevik can say the equivalent in his system of belief: Question boldly even

There is only one Education. and it has only one goal: the freedom of the mind.

the existence of the dialectical process and the withering away of the state. Jefferson's admonition ought to raise provocative questions for those who like to claim that the Republic was founded on "religious" principles, but it doesn't. Bolsheviks are not the only ones who never think of asking certain ques-

their minds for some comfortable sen-Iefferson was not a bolshevik. He timents and comforting beliefs, reason is the adversary to be hated and feared, the bringer of doubt and difficult questions, the sly disturber of the peace. To children who are led into whoredom, it matters not at all which sentiments and beliefs they are given in return for the freedom of their minds. Whatever the fee, they can not judge its worth.

Sometimes it seems that every illusion that cripples the mind is taught in schools. The silly notion that if one ideological faction is wrong the other must be right is planted in our minds by the belief that true/false tests have something to do with education. We imagine some real difference between Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives. government educationists and church educationists. They are all alike. Their prosperity depends on our believing that beliefs and sentiments-theirs, of course-are somehow finer, nobler, more virtuous or humane than mere reason.

Half past twelve is coming on, and neither the church cat nor the dog in the manger has slept a wink. Should we do something, or should we hope that they'll eat each other up? Will burglars steal this pair away? Will the Christian newsletter reprint all this?

Richard Mitchell is the author of Less Than Words Can Say and the publisher of the Underground Grammarian, from which this column is adapted.

### COMING ATTRACTIONS

**City Plights:** Why are some cities declining and others booming? Age doesn't tell the story and neither does geography and climate. The surprising answer has much to do with cars...and governments.

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Plus: Durk Pearson and Sandy Shaw with a new series of columns on pollution, book reviews by Marva Collins and William Niskanen, Viewpoints from Jim Davidson and Tom Bethell, and all of REASON's regular departments and features.

### LETTERS

(Continued from p. 10)

he started and Roosevelt carried on were socialist. We conservatives have had a devil of a time trying to take back the Republican Party from the progressives. Now that we have finally done it, it seems that the eastern establishment (read CFR, Trilateral Commission) has managed to get most of themselves appointed to high places in the Reagan administration.

> Harriet S. Nelson Bothell, WA

### **Flat-Rate Benefits**

I regret that Dr. Rothbard's Viewpoint (Sept.) on flat-rate taxation was a disappointment. Precisely, the difficulty I find with Dr. Rothbard's analysis is that, of necessity, he must support continuation of the current system as the alternative to the reform proposed. That the good doctor does not like the present system either is irrelevant. For, since the state is not going to abdicate or evaporate tomorrow, taxation will continue for the foreseeable future.

Ironically, Dr. Rothbard has hit the nail right on the head concerning why flatrate taxation is such a good, political idea: the poor and the rich will reap "goodies" while the middle class "will undoubtedly have to shell out when the dust has settled and the piper will have to be paid." And who is in a better position to tell Congress to cut out the boondoggling than that vast middle class which is not going to be happy with the new arrangement of accounts?

In short, Dr. Rothbard needs to put his economics degree away for a little while and learn a little of the art of political finesse. Simply being against the corporate state does not get us away from it. The way one gets a democratic government to move toward a goal one desires is to get as many people as possible pissed-off at that portion of the current arrangement one does not like. The flatrate income tax is the surest and quickest road toward that goal of reducing government activities by limiting the purse. It has the added advantages of (1) justice in the sense of eliminating from taxation the communistic principle of "ability to pay," (2) uniformity in the sense of setting one rate which everyone knows and personally can judge as to its sufficiency, and (3) integrity in the sense that a crooked politician no longer can gain election by telling one constituency that he will support those programs and tax policies

which benefit it at the expense of another constituency, to which will be assigned all the costs and burdens via adjustment of tax brackets....

> Robert B. Crim Naugatuck, CT

### Philosophical Questions

Judging by Ross Levatter's review of it (Oct.), Robert Nozick's Philosophical Explanations presents ideas and arguments that are wholly compatible with, if not quite supportive of the principles of a fully free society. Dr. Levatter's review tells enough of the story in Nozick's book for anyone to doubt this supposed compatibility, however.

For example, the idea that coercion includes "forcing others to believe things" by means of sound arguments is extremely troublesome. This view is not unrelated to an earlier discussion of Nozick's in which he argued that offering someone a very high value in return for something the person would rather not do-for example, life-long financial security or emergency medical care for demeaning work or service-is a form of



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By Edmund Burke Edited and with an Introduction by Frank N. Pagano

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### LETTERS

coercion.

It is no help here to observe, as Levatter does rather generously, that "Nozick does not believe all coercive acts are actionable," since that is to beg the question. A fully free society would uphold individual liberty as its highest political ideal, and coercion, in general, is the central threat to such liberty. Marxists, for example, have argued, precisely along lines that flow from Nozick's conception of coercion, that the propertied class coerces the working class by offering its members the very high value of subsistence in return for the very reluctantly performed service of labor. This kind of coercion, for Marxists, is not only actionable but deserves revolutionary response. If such offers are coercive, as Nozick believes, the advocate of a free society will have to accept that the worker's right to freedom is violated by the capitalist and that this must be remedied by law.

There may be ways of overcoming this result of Nozick's analysis, but for Levatter to fail to even try to come to grips with the issue, if ever so sketchily, is not good reviewing in a magazine like REASON....

> Tibor R. Machan Department of Philosophy, SUNY Fredonia, NY

### The Joy of Nozick

Ross Levatter's review of Nozick's Philosophical Explanations (Oct.) was a

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### TETTERS .....

joy to read. He pinpointed the qualities that make Nozick unique and inspiring: his exuberance, his tolerance, his technical brilliance. He seems just as pleased to share his philosophical discoveries with us as we are to be able to read them. That he happens to be libertarian is icing on the cake; the teacher who influenced me most in high school was a socialist, but she showed us all the joy of using one's mind. Perhaps you could persuade Nozick to write a piece for REASON....

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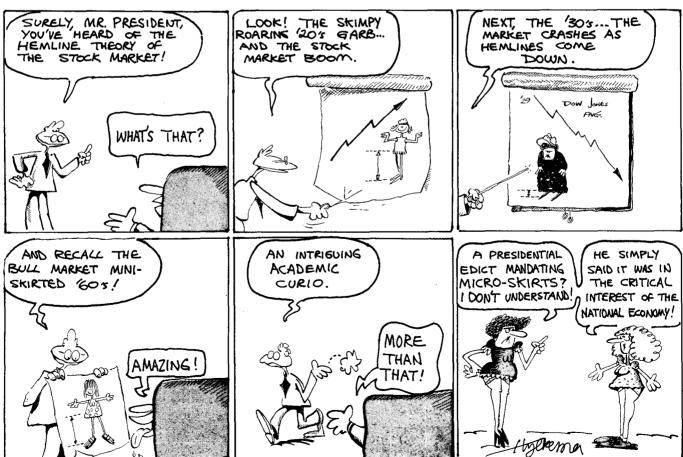
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(Continued from p. 62)

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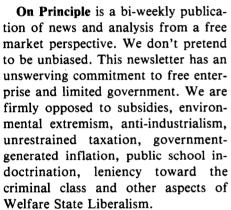
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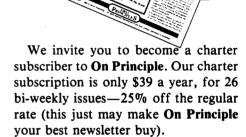


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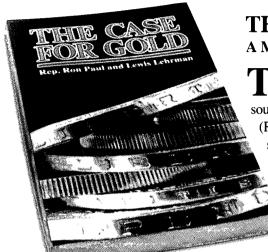
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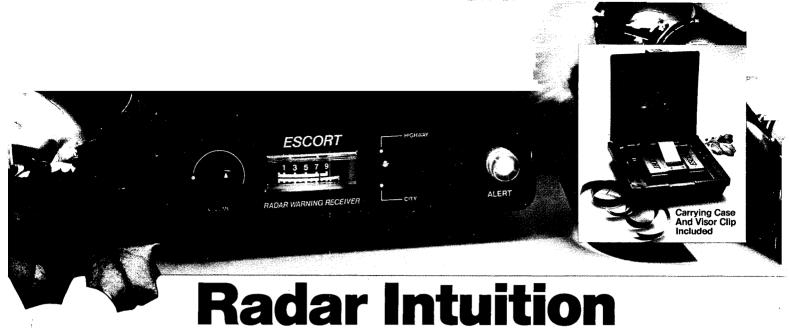
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