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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT: THE GREAT ISSUES. Edited by William Ebenstein. New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1955. 799 pages. \$6.00.

Rather than presenting ideas in the chronological order in which they appear in history, Ebenstein has arranged them under topic headings, each of which deals with a "great issue". Under each of the topic headings he has included excerpts from the published works of the great writers on political thought. Among the "great issues" treated are fascism, communism, the welfare state and supranational government. As such, the method of organization is commendable since it places each writing in its proper relationship thus rendering the principal theme of each topic more readily understandable, though many years may have elapsed between each contributing idea. Another commendable feature is the inclusion of the editor's own comments which preface each topic, and provide the background and perspective necessary for critical analysis of the idea content.

Of particular interest is the chapter on psychology and politics, in which Ebenstein includes an article by M. D. Eder, a British analyst, who concludes that the role of the family in forming unconscious motivations is of utmost importance in forming political thought patterns. It has long been recognized that man does not base his decisions on reason alone. Only in recent years however, has the extent of man's non-rational decisions been recognized. Eder states that subconsciously the father becomes the ideal of the son, and identification with the "father ideal" may later be transferred to other people or objects and become manifested by such words and phrases as "the father of the country", or "the fatherland". Many times the tie between the father and the son is not one of affection and allegiance, but is rather one of antagonism. Where that situation occurs, a bond may be created between the brothers and sisters in hostility to the father.

The two basic political attitudes of conservatism and liberalism closely reflect the two primary emotional attitudes of identification with the father or hostility toward him. The conservative transfers his affection for the father to his sovereign, and he feels hostility toward the children, or the people, who seek to overthrow his father. By contrast, the liberal who identifies himself with his brothers and sisters, is antagonistic toward the sovereign and favors

the people. Thus can be seen the basis of the theme of the French Revolution, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity". The motto reflects the resentment of the people for sovereign authority.

Another of the more interesting issues presented by Ebenstein, is "the right to rebel." The editor presents a selection from *Two Treatises of Government* in which John Locke maintained that anytime a majority was subjected to the rule of the minority is was entitled to rebel. He leaves open the question of what are the rights of the minority. Harold Laski, in his book *The State in Theory and Practice*, a portion of which Ebenstein reprints, saw in history many examples of minorities being inequitably treated and he is, therefore, driven to the conclusion that in the last resort ". . . the individual will have to decide for himself whether he will bow to established law and order, or whether he will feel compelled, by an inner impulse of irrepressible intensity, to rebel."

Noteworthy also, is a very interesting letter written by Thomas Jefferson and included in this work. Jefferson observed that at the time of "Shay's Rebellion" in 1787 the British newspapers concluded that the United States was in a state of anarchy. He rebutted the conclusion by attributing the rebellion to the fact that the people who comprised it were ill-informed. Jefferson then went on to state, "God forbid we should ever be twenty years without a rebellion. The people cannot be all, and always, be well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions it is a lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty."

Ebenstein has made a distinct contribution to political thought by the compilation of this anthology. The reprinted matter has been wisely selected; the introductory materials have been succinctly written. Political leaders, students and teachers would all benefit by reading this work.

ROBERT ECKERT