

From Synthesis to Analysis A Journey of the Western Mind

Charles F. Herberger

ANYONE WHO MAKES a serious attempt to understand the culture of the European middle ages is sooner or later struck by the genius for synthesis which that period displayed in almost every department of human activity. The period, or rather the latter centuries of it, appears to have been dominated by a rage for order, inclusiveness, and wholeness or in other words by a drive toward synthesis. We have only to think of the inclusiveness and internal relatedness of the moral and physical cosmos of Dante's *Comedia*, of the intellectual comprehensiveness of St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, of the typical medieval "histories of the world" or *cursor mundi*, or the intricate variety within unity of a cathedral like Chartres to perceive that the medieval way of thinking and feeling was not ours but a synthetic way.

I take our present exciting but chaotic civilization to be essentially the by-product of some four to five hundred years of a quite different way of thinking and behaving, an analytic way. During the Renaissance, the Reformation and the seventeenth century scientific revolution, the medieval synthesis began to dissolve. It dissolved in the crucible of abstraction, and the dissolving agent was the acid of analysis. This is more than a metaphor. The great analytic movement that began at that time has continued to make itself felt ever since, and it has produced our modern world. In religion it meant the division and splitting up of the universal church—both as an institution and as a means of rationally dealing with the mysteries and dilemmas of human existence. In politics it meant the dissolving of feudalism

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and the beginning of that process of abstraction and isolation from the universal family of man which we have come to call "nationalism." In the economic area, another process of abstraction took place. In the form of fluid money (capital), economic value was extractable from the total context of other human values that pertained in the middle ages—nobility, family, land, tradition, etc. A Florin (abstract economic value) was just as negotiable in the hands of an upstart tailor setting up as banker as it was in the hands of a Holy Roman Emperor. In the various arts, it meant the end of craftsman anonymity in the service of an aesthetic vision from God's point of view, as it were, to an abstracting of individual vision. Murals, for instance, give way to the individual window on reality, the easel painting—carefully signed either literally or through an unmistakably unique style. In historiography it meant the abstraction of a limited historical vision, national history or even

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biography, from the total vision of Western Man's story, the medieval *cursor mundi*.

Finally, it meant the separation of philosophy from theology, rapidly followed by the separation of science from philosophy. In turn, science itself split up into sciences, dependent upon how much each discipline abstracted from the total context of reality as its basic postulates or assumptions. Hence, today we have no science in Aristotle's sense—no inclusive rationale of the structure of reality—but instead astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology, etc. And even

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these divide up into sub-sciences and the sub-sciences into "schools of thought." In psychology, for instance, one can be a behaviorist, a gestaltist, a Freudian, a Jungian, etc. Even in philosophy proper there is little attempt to achieve synthesis anymore. Metaphysics is ignored while epistemology and logic, the branches of philosophy which deal precisely with the process of abstracting and analysing, are in the fore.

It might be objected that in philosophy Kant in the eighteenth century and Hegel in the nineteenth advanced the cause of synthesis. However, close examination will show that this is a deceptive conclusion in regard to the actual influence and results of their work. Each used the term "synthesis" in a very special and limited sense. It will be shown later that they were not using the term as it will be defined in this essay. Kant's synthesis *a priori* is actually the logical consistency of pure mathematics, which in turn is based upon the principles of analysis. Hegel's dialectical logic—thesis, antithesis, synthesis—is, indeed, a departure from Aristotelian logic, but it is essentially a logic of historical development rather than a function of cognition. Ironically, its practical impact on Western culture was realized by Marx and Lenin, who adapted it to an economic vision of history as "dialectical materialism" and gave us one more abstraction, namely, economically determined man.

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT in philosophy and art might also appear to have been an historical force working for synthesis. It is true that the Romantics, most notably Coleridge, recognized the creative and synthetic function of the imagination. However, aside from this important contribution to aesthetic theory, Romanticism in the long run reinforced rather than countered the dominant cultural tendency toward analysis and abstraction. Its emphasis upon individual self-expression in the arts led away from centrality of vision and toward ever more isolated personal idiosyncrasy. It also led to *l'art pour l'art* and consequently to the abstraction of art from the context of other human values. Hence, toward analysis as separation rather than toward synthesis and wholeness. In the visual arts this resulted in a progressive movement toward abstraction since formal relations were the only values recognized. For instance, from Cezanne through cubism to the abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollack. In music it led to the exclusion of melody and harmony as, for instance, in the atonal system of Schönberg. In literature it led to such experiments of questionable success as Gertrude Stein's prose, Dadaism, and the French "new novel." Since the medium of literature is words, which are abstractions in them-

selves, the medium does not lend itself to abstract referents without becoming vapid. If the Romantic Movement is judged by its fruit, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it aided rather than impeded the general cultural thrust toward abstraction and analysis.

It is obvious that these five hundred years of ever accelerating abstraction and analysis have been exceedingly fruitful. But mankind has paid the price in increasing psychic tension, anxiety, internal frustration and suffering. For, in almost inverse proportion, as man has become more and more physically comfortable he has become less and less mentally, morally, and aesthetically comfortable. The evidence of this state of affairs is not hard to find. Ours is a rich, even an opulent world, but it is also a world of wars, civil and international, of race

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riots and massacres, of juvenile delinquency and nervous and religious despair. For as man has abstracted segments of his total experience and submitted them to anatomizing and analysis, he has inevitably dissected and fragmented himself. What gives meaning to man as a conscious subject, and hence to human existence, is a sense of the unity of the self. This depends upon the integration of total experience—for isolated sensations, perceptions, and ideas can mean nothing in themselves. If conscious experience means nothing, then man means nothing—nothing more than a passive mirror which needlessly reflects events in space-time. Yet this is the strange picture of man and his world which five hundred years of abstraction and analysis have led the dominating intellects of our day to accept as “the truth.” But it is quite unbelievable.

It is suspect on several grounds. First, our spiritual despair today stems consequentially *not* from the ultimate nature of reality; for that has always been with us and has *always* been more or less unknown.¹ Whatever that ultimate nature may be, it was most certainly the same in Homer’s day as it is for us. Our troubles stem not from the nature of reality but from the particular picture of reality which we ourselves have constructed. We tend to forget that this picture is, after all, man-made. It is not at all the product of an indifferent universe of stubborn facts, but the imaginative construct—mathematically, philosophically, and aesthetically imagined—of that very consciousness which is ironically supposed to be an irrelevant factor in the dynamics of reality. In short, it is

merely a *Weltanschauung*, which we made and which we can likewise unmake or remake as man has constantly done in the historical past. To mistake it for “the truth” is short-sighted. Our world picture is highly selective and therefore incomplete; and because it is incomplete, it will prove ephemeral like others in the past. To the degree that it ceases to satisfy man’s deepest needs, it will cease to command man’s belief and respect.

Let us take a brief look at this world view. It begins with the modern scientific creation myth. I use the word “myth” deliberately—not to denigrate, for I respect the virtue of myths, but to distinguish between a man-made vision and the unknown ultimate reality of the universe. In the past, creation myths were expressed in poetic metaphors. Today the metaphors are mathematical and are rationally deduced from observed evidence, but they are metaphors for all of that and not reality itself. The universe, we are told, began at a specific point with a cosmic explosion called the big bang. With this explosion not only the antecedents of matter but also what we call “space” and “time” came into being. From a scientific point of view it is considered an irrelevant question to ask what preceded this explosion; for before the existence of time nothing can “precede.” To an old-fashioned rationalist this looks like assuming that something came out of nothing. The philosophical axiom *ex nihilo nihil fit* is violated. But scientists are empiricists first and rationalists second. What cannot be measured is not denied but simply ignored.

We are told that what follows are billions of years of an ever-expanding universe in which by a gradual evolution galaxies, stars, planets and cosmic debris form randomly but statistically in accord with the laws of physics. Finally on the planet earth, an obscure dust spot in a small solar system within a minor galaxy, two remarkable events occurred.

The first was the appearance of the initial living organism evolving from the inanimate chemical substratum. We are told that this momentous event happened entirely by chance. The proper chemical building blocks necessary for organic life happened to come together and a living organism came into being. With reference to probability theory, what was the likelihood of this accident before it happened? Jacques Monod, Nobel Prize-winning biologist, tells us:

Life appeared on earth; what, *before the event*, were the chances that this would occur? The present structure of the biosphere far from excludes the possibility that the decisive event occurred *only once*. Which would mean that its *a priori* probability was virtually zero.²

Once life was established on earth the long process of

organic evolution was set in motion. Through natural selection operating on chance mutations the multiplicity of living creatures evolved including the highly developed mammals and finally man. The second remarkable event, according to this world view, was the emergence of consciousness. Just as life accidentally emerged from inanimate matter, consciousness accidentally emerged from living organisms. Just when, where and how this came about remains an unsolved problem. In fact, there is some evidence that a rudimentary "awareness," if not consciousness, existed on the pre-organic level. Jacques Monod, for instance, writes of certain proteins "recognizing" each other by structure and even uses the words "a protein's cognitive function."³ But regardless of when or where consciousness occurred—the rudimentary awareness of proteins or the highly developed consciousness of man—it is assumed that it is merely an epiphenomenon which will be eventually explained totally within the frame of objective matter in motion. In effect, consciousness and, indeed, the entire psyche—conscious and unconscious—is assumed to be a second-class phenomenon, a by-product of physical evolution and a result but in no sense a cause of the long sequence of events since the big bang. That this is indeed the assumption is apparent in the words of Jacques Monod who states that while the physical brain is a reality the distinction between it and the "mind" (a subjective entity) is an

illusion. He writes:

We today are no less in the habit of differentiating between brain and mind than they were in the eighteenth century. Objective analysis obliges us to see that this seeming duality within us is an illusion.⁴

This relegation of the psyche, of consciousness and of all subjective activity to the status of second-class reality has dire implications. It means, of course, that all human values, being subjective, are man-made, relative and as subject to change as clothing styles. Long ago Plato identified three cardinal human values: the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. According to the world view we have examined, the good (now no longer capitalized) is whatever a particular society or even a particular person finds to best advantage. The beautiful likewise is a matter of social or personal idiosyncrasy (as a urinal recently displayed as a work of art well demonstrates). But the situation with the true is different. According to this world picture, the scientific method is the sole criterion of truth. But this involves a dilemma. There is nothing to be observed in the objective physical world upon which to base the value of truth. Preferring truth to untruth is a subjective evaluation. The indifferent universe described by the world picture could not care—truth or untruth, white or black balls in the cosmic roulette wheel! The scientist, in short, has made an exception to his own rule. The postulate of objectivity has been waived in this one instance. Science itself would be impossible without accepting "truth" *a priori* as a value.

In assuming such a remarkable role was played by sheer chance—and statistically highly improbable chance at that—in relegating all subjective phenomena to an inferior level of reality while at the same time basing science itself on a subjectively derived value, and in ignoring logic when it is methodologically inconvenient, this world view invites critical suspicion.

We have arrived at this picture by way of five hundred years of abstracting and analysing segments of our total human experience while largely neglecting synthetic thinking, feeling and acting. We know a great deal that is genuinely valuable about certain hypothetical creatures known as physiological man, chemical man, biological man, psychological man, economic man, political man, linguistic man, aesthetic man and so forth, but what do we know about that concrete, organic synthesis—real man—such as you and I? In our immediate experience of life these analytical abstractions are nowhere to be found. As hypotheses, they can be made to apply to others as objects and even to ourselves as objects—but they do not apply to that conscious, analysing, imagining,

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synthesizing, judging and deciding *self*, which is always a subject and never an object. This *self* is something other than the sum of the parts hypothesized to explain man as an object or as a class.

What then is this illusive *self*? I propose to approach the problem by asking not what it *is*, but what it *does*. There are certain rather obvious functions that it at least appears to perform. It perceives, it abstracts from perception, it remembers selected concretions and abstractions, it imagines new combinations of concretions and abstractions and even totally new creations (by analogy with the known), and it judges, decides, evaluates and synthesizes the raw material of perception, memory, and imagination. The self appears to have a cognitive function (it is the self that “knows”), a creative function (it is the self that “imagines”), and a voluntaris-

“Synthetic ‘knowing’ is complementary to analytic ‘knowing.’ Whereas in analysis the self abstracts something from context to come to know it, in synthesis it is something about the context itself that comes to be known. Through analysis the self comes to know parts; through synthesis it comes to know wholes.”

tic function (it is the self that wills or “decides”). However, it is important to realize that what has been traditionally called the reason, the will and the imagination are not separable entities but functions of the self which act together in coordination. In coming to know there is a will to know, and imagination plays an indispensable part in the process. I propose to examine certain aspects of the cognitive function of the self, specifically the process of coming to “know” by analysis and the complementary process of coming to “know” by synthesis.

In either case the first step in cognition is perception. Early theories assumed that perception was strictly a passive affair. John Locke thought that the mind was a *tabula rasa* (a blank page like an unexposed photographic film) and that sense impressions were passively registered on it. But as already mentioned, this theory was superseded in the nineteenth century by the recognition of the creative role of the imagination in perception.

Coleridge made an important distinction between what he called the primary imagination and the secondary imagination. The primary imagination functions actively in ordinary sense perceptions by intuiting wholes. Nearly everyone is acquainted with the classic trick of the silhouette in black which at one moment one sees as a vase and the next moment as a facial profile. The difference is not in the object seen but in the

interpretation of the whole by the image-making faculty, the imagination. The secondary imagination, drawing from the primary imagination as ultimate source, creates new organically related syntheses. Although such syntheses are not limited to works of art, art provides perhaps the most revealing examples of the creations of the secondary imagination.

Let us turn now from perception to the cognition of meaning. To “know” anything is to know its meaning. To the degree that anything has no meaning, it is unknown. And *meaning* is a phenomenon that is entirely subjective. No event in space-time has any meaning until a consciousness imparts meaning to it. The self literally imparts meaning to experience in the process of coming to “know.” Perception is the first step in this process, but a further creative function of the self as consciousness follows. There are two fundamental ways in which the self imparts meaning to abstracted entities and thereby comes to “know” anything. The first is through analysis (or taking apart) and the second is through synthesis (or putting together).

A thing taken apart from its total context is assigned meaning as a unity. It is just this one thing and not another. In traditional formal logic, this is called the principle of identity. A is A, a particular unity identifiable as such. A thing is also assigned meaning by recognizing its difference from another thing. If a thing can be separated as a unity from its total context, then, at the very least, that from which it has been separated is a second unity. Traditional logic calls this the principle of contradiction. If A is A, then A is not B. Finally, a thing is assigned meaning by excluding from its meaning the negation of that meaning. Traditionally this is called the principle of the excluded middle. A is not both A and not A. These fundamental postulates and others like them, called primitive propositions in logic, give all systems of analysis whatever *meaning* they have as *systems*. I am, of course, referring only to their meaning as pure abstract systems and not to such meanings as might be arbitrarily assigned to them by associating their factors or symbols with physical facts. But notice that in either case, the meaning of the system itself and the meaning of symbols as associated with facts is not *in* the observed physical world, but the subject, the self, is the ground from which all meaning arises in the process of coming to “know.”

But analytic “knowing” is only one kind of cognition. The self also imparts meaning to the chaos of raw experience by synthesis (or putting together). Synthetic “knowing” is complementary to analytic “knowing.” Whereas in analysis the self abstracts something from context to come to know it, in synthesis it is something about the context itself that comes to be known. Through

analysis the self comes to know parts; through synthesis it comes to know wholes. Complementary to the analytic principle of identity is the synthetic principle of analogy. Whatever is the same is the same not by identity but by analogy. It is relatively the same, not absolutely the same. And the self imparts the meaning by drawing the analogy. Complementing the analytical principle of contradiction is the synthetic principle of polarity. Whatever is different is different not by contradiction but by opposition. For instance, when the self assigns meaning to the term "up," this meaning exists only in relation to its polar opposite, "down." Again the meaning is relative rather than absolute and again it is imparted by the self. Finally, the analytic principle of the excluded middle is complemented by the synthetic principle of the included middle. Relations are not excluded from each other, but included in each other. The total meaning of any part of a context depends upon its relation to every other part of that context and hence to the whole. And this is true for each part. Each part includes in its meaning every other part. Any part is therefore not absolutely itself but relatively itself. And here again, the *meaning* is imparted by the self in coming to know the relation.

The principles of synthesis are well illustrated by the following diagram.

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A B A B
B A B A
A B A B
B A B A

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In the above diagram, the meaning of any particular A or any particular B includes its relationship to all the other A's and B's. The various A's and B's are the same not by identity but by analogy—analogue shape and position. A is not every other A, but it is like every other A. The A's and B's are not different by contradiction but by complementation. No pattern, and hence no meaning, would exist if the A's did not provide it for the B's and the B's for the A's. Finally, the meaning of any particular letter in the context includes the meaning of all the others. Neither the A's nor the B's have any meaning apart from the integrated pattern of which each is an essential part. Remove any part and you have affected the synthetic meaning of the whole.

I am referring, of course, only to the relative or formal meaning of these symbols in this context. Of course, A and B have traditionally meant the first and second letters of the alphabet respectively. But these are arbitrarily assigned meanings not derivable from the context above in itself. Symbols could have been invented with no traditional associations, and then shape, position, and

context would have been the sole basis for any meaning the self could impart to them.

But in what sense does the self *impart* meaning here? Could it not be argued that the diagram is an objective fact with just such an arrangement of letters and no other, and that consequently the meaning is strictly objective? The answer is that a relationship which is *potentially* meaningful exists objectively, but it does not exist as *meaning* until discerned by a conscious process of synthesis. A mirror could reflect this pattern accurately but could impart no meaning to it.

There is also an important distinction between the practical uses of analysis and the practical uses of synthesis. Ideally, analysis is a strictly intellectual process

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deliberately excluding such other human faculties as feeling, sensation, and intuition. In dealing with scientific or technological problems, for instance, emotions, sensations and intuitions are not to be trusted lest they impede or distort rigorous logical thinking. In contrast, synthesis lends itself to a coordination of human faculties. Although synthesis is not confined to the arts, it finds there, perhaps, its fullest expression. Consider, for instance, symphonic music. The notes and the scale on the score are an intellectual structure. But the music itself as sound engages the sense of hearing which in turn evokes feelings and at peak moments, for at least some listeners, even intuitions. Hence all the human faculties may, at least ideally, be active in concert.

The danger to our modern culture is that the enormous prestige of analysis and the emphasis placed upon it can and does lead to an unbalanced development of human potentials. Of course accurate thinking is desirable, but emotions and sensations are important to wholeness, and if they are cut off from the discipline of thinking or, worse, are deliberately suppressed, they will find expression in unhealthy ways. And so today they do. Feeling without thinking can become fanaticism. It also can become sentimentality or morbidity. And sensation without thinking and feeling can find expression in promiscuous sex and irrational violence. In short, in brutality. Unfortunately these results are all too evident today, and our television and mass media pander to these indulgences because there is a consumer demand for

them as “entertainment.” Such “entertainment” is an outlet for sensation and feeling when the rigors of “serious” analytic thinking are relaxed. As for the faculty of intuition, in our culture men are supposed to pretend it does not exist. Women, of course, know better.

To return now to the consideration of the self and its relation to the modern world picture, we have seen that the source of all meaning is the self. If it is true that the self imparts to human experience whatever meaning that experience can have, then the particular meaning of “reality” which we have constructed for ourselves by analysis and synthesis can be no *more real* than the subjective processes of the self which have conjured it up. What I have tried to suggest is that the self is certainly real or the word “real” is word without meaning. I have also tried to show how a predilection for analysis has dominated our thinking and consequently also our feeling and acting for about five hundred years while we have tended to ignore, to belittle, or to lack confidence in our equally potent ability to synthesize. Of course, both of these abilities are exercised in every age. They are complementary and interdependent. But the medieval world and the modern world differ significantly in the degree of faith in the one or the other. The dominant creative drive of the middle ages was toward synthesis while the still dominant drive of the modern world is toward analysis.

The journey of the Western Mind from synthesis to analysis and from unity to multiplicity has been a rewarding journey of discovery in many ways. But it has also fractured man’s sense of wholeness and confronted the self with a spectrum of seemingly independent abstractions. It has given us a world view which, although not accepted by all, has certainly established itself as dominant among influential figures in the Western World and wherever the West leaves its mark. In providing knowl-

edge of the structure of the physical world and the means of achieving spectacular technological progress it has been an overwhelming success. But it has undermined traditional values without providing anything to replace them. And by developing the habit of thinking in isolation from sensation, feeling and intuition—a habit appropriate for such activities as science and technology and the like but inappropriate for activities where a balanced sensibility is needed—it has resulted in a loss of integrated wholeness and a debasing or impoverishment of sensation, feeling and intuition. Finally, by assuming the origin and total dependence of the psychic realm on accidents that occurred in the material realm, it has truncated man’s vision of the totality of reality.

There is no reason to believe that this world picture is final and unalterable. It suffers from a number of questionable assumptions some of which I have attempted to point out. And since it is an abstraction it is inevitably an incomplete picture. If Western Civilization is to survive, it will have to resolve a chaos of seemingly unrelated abstractions and reconceive the unity of the self in a way compatible with both science and the inner needs of man both individually and collectively. It is in this direction that the next steps of the journey of Western Man must be taken, and it must be achieved through creative efforts of synthesis which always have been and always will be within man’s reach.

Notes

1. As for the physical world, what Kant called the “*Ding an sich*” (the thing in itself) will probably always elude us because the structure of the human mind limits observation.
2. Jacques Monod, *Chance & Necessity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 144.
3. *Ibid.*, 91
4. *Ibid.*, 159.

Kirk’s Constitutional Insights Both Profound and Timely

Joseph Baldacchino

THE RELEASE OF Russell Kirk’s latest work, *The Conservative Constitution* (Regnery Gateway, xi + 241 pp., \$22.95), is a significant event, both literary and political. While the book may not achieve the acclaim of Kirk’s first and most famous book, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, now in its seventh revised edition, it should become a classic that stays in print for many years to come.

With the eloquence and vigor that are uniquely his, Kirk examines the Constitution’s historical and philosophical roots, the context in which it was drafted and

ratified, the intent of its Framers, its subsequent development, and the prospects for its continued health.

It speaks volumes about the low estate of education and citizenship in contemporary America that much of what Kirk says here—though historically unexceptionable and heavy with the common sense for which our forebears were renowned throughout the world—will come as a startling revelation to many.

Others, having their own agenda, would prefer that the light Kirk shines on current controversies had been left unlit. For this book is as relevant to hotly debated

questions of the present-day political world as it is timeless in its understanding of the Constitution and its relation to unchanging human nature.

In this era when even some self-professed conservatives speak of the U.S. Constitution as though it were a list of abstract principles conceived in a vacuum and everywhere equally valid, Kirk reminds us that the Constitution is a peculiarly American document, rooted in centuries of practical experience under colonial and British institutions.

While much is made of Jefferson's highly theoretical and abstract formulations near the beginning of the Declaration of Independence, Kirk notes that the Francophile Jefferson was atypical of the signers of the Declaration, let alone the Framers of the Constitution eleven years later. Congress accepted Jefferson's language, not because it reflected the American consensus, but because its members hoped, successfully as it turned out, to win sympathy in France.

The American Revolution, unlike the radical and destructive French Revolution soon to follow, had little to do with etherial notions such as equality and unalienable rights. The American Revolution was fought to restore concrete historical rights, such as "no taxation without representation," that King and Parliament had infringed.

Because ordered to the particular needs and circumstances of America, says Kirk, the Constitution is not readily transplantable to countries with greatly different cultures. For that reason he warns against jingoistic crusades to impose American beliefs and institutions on other nations.

"If the leading patriots of 1776 were no flaming radicals when they signed the Declaration of Independence," Kirk writes, "the delegates who framed the Constitution of 1787 were pillars of order." Unlike the French revolutionaries who were men who mostly had been excluded from governing power and hence were naïve concerning public policy, the American Framers

were drawn from a natural aristocracy with long experience in colonial and local government affairs.

What can be said of the Framers as men? The vast majority, Kirk notes, were Christians who would have subscribed to the Apostles' Creed. At the same time, they were tolerant and temperate in faith and not given to sectarian strife.

Another factor that bulked large was their adherence to the code of the gentleman. "Presumably every Framers," Kirk observes, "thought of himself as a gentleman, and desired to be so regarded. Gentility, by the eighteenth century, did not require that a man or a woman be high-born; rather, it signified outwardly manner and dress and speech; inwardly, a sense of honor and duty."

Not the intemperance and extreme egalitarianism of the French Jacobins, then, but reverence and unassuming devotion to duty are the pillars upon which the American system was built. If we would be true to our heritage, we must seek to emulate the aristocratic spirit of the Founders, not only in our politics but in our daily lives.

There is much more wisdom in Kirk's book than can be essayed in this short space. His several chapters on the proper role of religion in our constitutional system, and the threat to that system posed by what amounts to a court-imposed Establishment of Secular Humanitarianism in the public schools of our day, are particularly noteworthy. So, too, his reminders of the moral underpinnings that must support our free-market economy if we are not to be undone.

"Today the United States is the great conservative power in a world that has been falling to ruin since 1914," Kirk says in his Foreword. "To apprehend this country's conservative duties and opportunities in defense of civilization, it is well first to become acquainted with the conservative intent and function of America's constitution, both written and unwritten." For those who would heed Kirk's invitation, *The Conservative Constitution* is an excellent place to start.

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