

The Collegian

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The Polity and Political Inertia

The long-existing manifestation of political inertia in the college community can be traced to a single source. This source is the Polity's lack of definition. That is to say, as a piece of functional political machinery the Polity has no explicitly defined sphere of operation. Its end is undetermined. Consequently the necessity of its existence is and has been unfelt by the college community. This situation lends itself to a disposition of political inertia. In order that we might effect some clarification of the ambiguity in which the Polity has found itself, we shall address ourselves to the following basic question: In a community of learning, what situations give rise to the necessity of a Student Political organization?

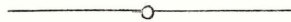
Let us first consider the term "community". Here we shall have to present first a general definition of the term, after which we must attend to its dual conception as held by some of the college citizenry. A general definition of the term "community" is expressed by the notion of a group of people united by common aims and common purposes. We tend to distinguish between two types of communities. On the one hand, we have labeled one as the Community of Learning. On the other hand, we sometimes acknowledge the meagre existence of a political community called the Polity. The former is defined by tutorials, laboratories, seminars, lectures and (so I've heard) whatever dialectic is carried on. The latter is an orphan and, as yet, has not been given a place in the general order of things. With respect to the Community of Learning, it is clear that there is some movement towards a common goal. This goal, is, of course, learning: learning as it takes place on the formal or in-

formal level. However, a consequence of the pursuit of learning is social contact, which gives rise to the necessity of rules of social conduct. The introduction of these rules must be guided by a single concept. This concept is freedom. As there is a maximum of academic freedom so there must be a maximum of social freedom. This raises the problem of determining the conditions under which a maximum of social freedom can obtain. We shall now pass on to consider this problem as it relates to the two previously mentioned aspects of the term "community".

The search for a suitable receptacle into which we might safely place the term "freedom" leads us to a condition of autonomy. The autonomous condition, as it relates to the political community, constitutes a state of freedom. It is a state of freedom in the sense that a group of individuals has gained the consciousness of itself as being capable of self-government. In fine it means that law is or can be self-imposed. This is the genesis of the Polity or indeed of any body politic. It is characterized by the specific needs and requirements of its several members. The Polity is involved in the problem of not only meeting the demands of a purely political community, but also of serving a community engaged in the pursuit of learning. In this latter capacity it is required that the Polity provide a suitable matrix for the business of learning. As it functions in both of these capacities the Polity appears as an instrument in bringing about a disposition to the learning process. Thus in the origination of this political organization we define it in terms of the ends it is to serve. This type of definition of the Polity, however, does not presume to offer a solution to the problem of political inertia in the college community. That we have become politically inert

is attributable to our failure to make this function specific. Yet our definition can assume the role of a reference point to which proposed solutions can be referred.

Thus far we have seen that the combined presence of laws regulating social conduct and the notion of freedom, necessarily presupposed by those laws, give rise to the formation of the Polity. Further, this combination suggests the intended function of that organization in the college community. If, however, we are to relieve the community of its present disposition towards the Polity, more than a definition in terms of ends is required. We must start with a given maturity in people that expresses a willingness to assume political responsibilities. Consequently, we must be responsive to the existing needs and requirements of the immediate situation and see the possibility of their satisfaction by political means.



Mr. Adler's Argument for the Existence of God

It was perhaps misleading that Mr. Adler used the word "proof" of his argument for the existence of God since by the end of his lecture it had become apparent that he did not think that all the premisses had been established beyond the shadow of a doubt. His use of the word "proof" seems to have been dictated by the claim that the argument is not only logically valid but also provides substantial rational support for belief in the existence of God.

I here reproduce the reasoning:

PREMISSES

- (1) If an effect is known as existing, the cause either existed to cause it or exists to cause it.
- (2) Some contingent being exists.
- (3) Contingent beings need a cause of their existence at every moment of their existence.
- (4) No contingent being can cause the existence of anything.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, God exists as a necessary being that is the cause of beings known to exist and known to be contingent in their existence.

The initial premiss indicates that it is to be an à posteriori argument, i.e., one that proceeds from effect to cause. This it must be, since there are only two ways of knowing that something exists: direct apprehension of the thing (which presumably is ruled out in the case of God, though there is at least one Jew who says that the existence of God is self-evident to the Jews) or inference by means of some notion of causal connection. In proceeding from effect to cause Mr. Adler's argument is like the Thomistic arguments. But on Thomistic grounds Mr. Adler rejects the Thomistic arguments. According to Thomas Aquinas, it is rationally possible and it is not incompatible with the

concept of creation ex nihilo that the world had no beginning. If that is so, an infinite regress within the temporal order is possible. But, at least the first three of the five Thomistic arguments for God's existence rest on the assumption of the impossibility of any such thing. If one maintains that what Thomas really means (all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding) is not a temporal succession of causes but rather a hierarchy of causes in which God is the primary cause and produces effects through secondary causes, that cannot apply to the being of the effects. For "being" says Thomas, "is the proper effect of God", by which is meant that God and God alone is the cause of being. Lots of other things might be the cause of coming-into-being, but not of being. For instance, parents are the cause of the coming-into-being of their children, but they are not the cause of their being. It follows that the only possible proof of the existence of God must be a proof of God as the unique and direct cause of the being of the known effect.

Now, if we are to prove the existence of God, the word "God" must have some meaning, and the proposition "God exists" must be meaningful. Mr. Adler uses the ontological argument not so much as a proof of God's existence, but rather as an explication of the meaning of the word "God". It shows not that God exists, but that if He exists, He exists necessarily. It shows that God cannot be thought of as contingent being but only as necessary being, i.e. as being in which essence and existence are one. It contributes to the argument for God's existence in so far as that argument depends upon an understanding of the distinction between contingent being and necessary being. For the meaningfulness of the proposition "God exists" Mr. Adler depends upon the Thomistic conception of the analogy of being. How can we predicate anything meaningfully of God? Whether or not we know that God exists, we can at least say that, if He exists, either He is altogether unlike the things of our experi-

ence, or else He is essentially like the things of our experience, or He is partly like and partly unlike. These are the only possibilities. If He were altogether unlike, then we could not think of Him as having any being, for all the things of our experience have some being; and it would be absurd to prove the existence of what has no being. On the other hand, if God were essentially like the things of our experience, then He would be corporeal, finite, sensible, mutable, imperfect (which is offensive to the understanding), and His existence should be as knowable as that of any of the things about us (which it clearly is not). Therefore, we must take the third possibility and say that God is partly like and partly unlike the things of our experience. The relevance of this to the argument for God's existence is that it enables us to say that, although it is meaningful to say that God does not exist if we understand the word "exist" in exactly the same sense as when we predicate it of a stone, still it is meaningful to say that God does exist if we take the meaning of the word "exist" as only analogous to that which it has when we predicate it of the stone.

Mr. Adler was careful to state the difficulties that prevent one from accepting the premisses of his argument as propositions known to be true. In the first place, how do we know the truth of the proposition: "Some contingent being exists"? We might be tempted to say that this is shown by the fact that individual things are reducible to nothingness. But a little reflection shows that we have no experience of the annihilation of anything, but only of its change into something else. We should have to show that the being of the whole universe is contingent, i.e., that the whole universe could not-be, if the argument is to be a proof of the existence of God. This would be extremely difficult, particularly if the argument also requires us to suppose that the whole universe is everlasting. Are we in a position to assert that we know that the universe is contingent?

In the second place, do we really know the truth of the proposition that no contingent being can cause the existence of anything? If we have exper -

ence of causation, it is always experience of the causation of the coming-into-being of something. We have no experience of the causation of the being, as distinguished from the coming-into-being, of something. How, then, can we assert that no contingent being can cause the existence of anything?

Because of these difficulties Mr. Adler acknowledged that we cannot say that his argument is yet established as a proof of the existence of God, although the reasonableness of the premisses makes the jump to belief only a little jump. "Jumping a little," says Mr. Adler, "is better than jumping a lot."

Let me say at this point that we should not let superficial considerations (such as our dislike of a kind of bullying on Mr. Adler's part in the question period) prejudice our judgement about the worth of the lecture. No honest person could deny that the lecture was well put together and well presented and represented good thinking about a serious question.

If one is a dogmatic atheist one will reject at the outset any attempt to prove the existence of God, since it is impossible to prove what is false. If one is simply an inquirer, one who does not know but wants to know whether God exists or not, one will then have an interest in any argument that may satisfy one's desire to know. The crucial question then is whether an argument for God's existence can satisfy this desire, i.e. whether the attempt itself to prove God's existence does not falsify God's existence. Mr. Adler recognized this question when he tried to show the meaningfulness of the proposition "God exists" through the doctrine of the analogy of being. But if we examine closely the doctrine of the analogy of being, we find that it hardly explains the possibility of making predications of which God is the subject. What it says is that when we say that God is, the word "is" has a meaning not wholly different from and not wholly the same as that which it has when we predicate it

of something within our experience. Therefore, it has a meaning which is partly different from and partly the same as that which it has when predicated of something within our experience. We have, then, to distinguish a respect in which the word "is" means something different from and another respect in which it means something the same as what it means when applied to the things we perceive. If all our knowledge of existence starts with these things, then it will be impossible for us to know even what the existence of God might mean in the respect in which it is different from their existence. And in the respect in which it is the same as the existence of the things about us it would not be in any way different from their existence. Hence, the doctrine of the analogy of being leads to the very problem which it pretends to solve. There seems to be no getting around the fact that if we are to say "is" of God, we must necessarily make of God a being among beings, an existence among existences. But this does falsify the very notion of God Who surely cannot be thought of as being in a class that includes also the things of this world. Rather He must be thought of as the transcendent principle of all these beings. If one replies that the consequences of this line of reasoning are that saying anything about God involves one in a contradiction and that theology as "speech about God" is impossible, then we happily accept these consequences.

The argument that I have just presented applies equally whether we mean the God of Plato or the God of the Bible or the Koran. Plato presents no proof of the existence of God, although all the argument of the Platonic dialogues seems to point to the necessity of presupposing the Good as the first principle of all being and all discourse and yet as that which transcends being and eludes discourse.

Mr. Adler made the claim that, although revealed dogma may have been helpful in pointing to certain of the premisses of his argument, the argument itself

does not rest on revelation. Whether or not we possess complete knowledge of the truth of the premisses, they are in principle, he would say, accessible to unaided human reason. I would deny this. For the argument requires the distinction between contingent being and necessary being. Not only our grandfather Parmenides but also our fathers Plato and Aristotle, would maintain that the very notion of contingent being is self-contradictory. For contingent being means being that can not-be. While, according to Plato and Aristotle at least, things may lose their being, pass out of being, the being itself of those things, precisely because it is being, cannot pass out of being. Being itself is not contingent. Mr. Adler admits the difficulty of knowing that there is any contingent being as distinguished from contingent becoming. He also admits, as it seems, that the notion of contingent being is suggested by the dogma of creation. He should rather admit, I think, that the notion itself of contingent being depends on the dogma of creation. Is it not from the revelation that all things other than God depend upon His will for their being that we get the notion of contingent being, i.e. of being that can not-be? Then, to be sure, the doctrine of creation must imply a radically different conception of being from that held by Plato and Aristotle.

Arguments for the existence of God are worth considering not so much because they lead the mind to believe in God's existence. For what does such belief mean anyway if the result is only that we believe in God's existence the way we believe in the existence of a stone or a star that we may happen to see? They are worth considering because they indicate that man in his thinking cannot avoid the question of God, whatever answer he may give to this question. I cannot agree with Mr. Adler that the argument, even if it is not finally conclusive, makes the act of belief only a little jump as opposed to a big jump. If we do not believe to begin with, we are no nearer believing as a consequence

of the argument. For, as long as the doubt is there, we are still confronted with the possibility that God does not exist. Besides that, it may be that man does not come to God except through the recognition that all his reasoning brings him no closer. If we could and were to start from the point of view of faith, there would be something ridiculous or worse about setting out to prove God's existence; for to produce the proof we should have to deny faith and make God's existence a matter of doubt until the proof was completed. Can we imagine that Moses, when God appeared to him in the burning bush, to command him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt, or Amos, when God took him from following his flock and said "Go, prophesy to my people Israel", could without folly have replied, "Let me, first of all, O Lord, construct a proof of your existence"?



IMAGINATION

The esoteric grains of sight,
wild fountains ingenious hid,
making nameless colored symbols
at the focal point of imagination.
Projecting lurid dramatic gods
gushing wordless from sources unknown.

Horns blow silver vivid faces white;
alchemy of misdirection.

Walkers on a dead unutterable world
toll their inclination
and hear not one delicate thin echo.

Dogs at my feet bark cold in the sky.
Wild winters intricately fade
from snow, air and fire of an old world,
where foamed stars gazed silent
and golden fireworks splash
the decisive, endless, turquoise sky
when man rode the wild fountains down.

- Joel Herman

WAITING FOR RAIN

Antique skull-faced women sit
on the marble steps of their previousness.
Weak light is from a sun almost spent,
skeleton-eyes reflect the golden moments of its death.
The female of them drained, long ago,
with their many crabbing children,
buried in the mountainous graveyards of their soul.

Chained on promethean rock-pasts
they heave multiple spirits
that merely tin a rattle in the air.
Goodbye-roads wave a hollow arm,
grow purple, dislocating into shoulders
of vague and rustic arts.

The delicate glass between life and death
rings with assailing voices:
hulked eyes distain its chrystal glory.

They have no place here on earth,
these brittle, antique, ancient vessels
filled with pulps of darkened flowers,
drooping in their unwanted, necessary way.

These old, broken rhythms
remember their men only
as faded, phallic gestures
pushed by bull-elephant desires
of a male affectation:
swinging their rough trunks
backed by huge cliff-wishes.

They do not even remember the truth:
these aged marinated fishes,
gasping for air out of their element.
Their truths are dark and beds and latrines:
are saturnine figures on the shelf
and dismembered shadows in the hall.
The complex, electric movements
of the earth are mute,
and those antique faces
gorge themselves with night.

- Joel Herman

The lamb of love
that wools my eyes
makes me, the shepherd, stray
Would wool were in my ears instead
to stay taunt tune beyond my head
still hands and lips would sure devise
that I, the piper, pay
The piper hides with solemn look
a heart that trips on its own crook

The wily mesh
my idylls spun
betrays heart to clear sight
A feign hazed on high tapestry
I tempted lamb to take for me
but now, to be what's bare begun,
might seem too wrong to right
Lamb led by image dreamly real
in love with sorcery for dim ideal

The rest to wrought
and mold the feign
from self slain for a lamb
But give for take's not my unique
or else some misshape ends the seek
then sculptor's work would show the plain
ravine so etched in sham
I face far posture, yet in seed,
to lead lamb where her love will lead

We climbed way up to montane blue
Where snowclouds swirled in steelsharp cold,
Fulfilled our lungs with crisp air clean,
Felt crystals flitting with the wind,
 Whipping our face wet,
 Biting our lip white
In crying smile of joy.

There glassrock shimmered in the sun
And sudden colors caught our eye;
Kaleidoscopic glintings played
While prisms streamed and ricocheted:
 The myriad mirror
 That brightens the fairer
But slowmelts slush below.

We looked back down to hours before.
Our eyebeam penetrated crags
And jagged fragments crack to clear
A path for sight in past snowblind.
 New juggernaut vision
 Discerned with precision
The heat and stumble there.

Their greytone music thrums one sound
Good background for monotony
The hum and whir of meat machine
With dragging antiphonic feet
The roll of elegiac drum
Runs counter to the grating whisps
Of poltergeists that promenade
To form the flux that's scene for snow

Fledgling, back up from that ledge.
The thin air here has lightened heads
To try a soar down for display;
They did not fly but flapped and fell.
 We climbed up bleak
 Sheer ice to peak.
The good slush broke our fall.

Aglut says
Let's lead proportionate lifes
And means touch much to the middle
But if there's no borsch in it life's
Bland paeans from some second fiddle.
Aglut should see that he needs these proportions
To help him in making the proper distortions,
To sound out the deeps one can jump overboard in
For stick in the mud never crosses the Jordan.
If Aglut in retrospect
Checks out his pithy put
Rock solid gnome
He may take the hetrospect
Rather than blocked solid
Roadways to Rome.
Just one look up from the fond will have found
Nothing happens on the ground from the ground.

The moderate soul
O, C. P. Aglutton
Is under control
But who's got the button?

Though someone claims a love for you
I hardly cry, "perdition!"
For three girls show me they would woo,
And one boy in addition.

But one can't sate these loves of Baal;
They give themselves too quickly.
Their suffering is the sangu' vital;
They're only happy sickly.

A rock I was and sitting well
When all distaff despised me.
None could she make this stone to swell
But you, you've oxidized me.

So steering meditranean
From midcourse never falter.
You'll hardly spy a zany in
The cloak of shaled Gibraltar.

Don't let ephemeris make you tense
With actions strictly aorist,
For, though imperfect in this sense,
Of all my gem's the rarest.

True, takes a while to form this sort
(Christ found it thus of Peter),
But ram potential don't abort
By kidding with a bleater.

Sonnet

O Love, how quick you are in act, and blind,
That, not considering time or need,
Would ever seek some stranger souls to bind,
And form a blossom ere is cast a seed.
Your frivolous ways do mock firm Friendship's ties
By making all her tapestries seem pale
(Which are woven of Trust unscarred by envious lies)
Compared to Love's exotically fashioned veil.
Your honeyed shafts in aimless volleys fly,
And many there are who would transfixed be;
Yet those are spared who most desire to die
That sweetest death which seems to make souls free.
But of all your faults, this in you I grieve;
That without his being loved, a lover you would leave.

- J. Chase

Our Youth, our Parent who bore us our Love
Unexpected, smooth as a blue ripple
Licked soothingly our one secret birth wound,
Plucked us from the nipple and set us forth

Strolling through the fields of a summer,
One all-day never spent under a cloud;
Coaxed by nightingale voice and dove tongue above,
By all, that with us, found the fields of summer.

(We stood now, leaning on the crutch
Of each's other, aware of
Our Youth, our Parent who was always there
With a watch and a reach care full.)

Then, suddenly, as if the sea
Had washed to us and made a beach
Of sunflower-sand and drift wood bleached old,
The fields and all, that with us, found them,
Left us -- alone with just our Parent.

We gave a nowhere-gaze and saw
Waves rage in Artemis-anger,
Water in storm, torment and trouble
Beating down on the battered sea
Forbidding any further stroll.

Our Love carefully laid on altar block,
Strove to cry out as the Third Libation was poured
("Other appeasement must be possible!")
In fear frenzied and filial fearing,
By our Youth, our Parent who bore us our Love.

----- Burt Siemens