

## *American Philosophy, Socialism, and the Contradictions of Modernity*

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### *Introduction: Classical American Philosophy and the End of Socialism*

What bearing does classical American philosophy have upon recent momentous historical changes—for example, the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, in the Baltic States, and throughout the Soviet Republics? Here if ever there presents itself a concrete historical nexus of “problems of men” in urgent need of philosophical critique in the Deweyan sense: an identifiable subject, self, or community, surviving in its environment by means of available material and cognitive resources; the emergence of an immediate and/or long-range “problem” which is generative of stress, indecision, conflict; the genetic explanation of the problem—historical, causal, and circumstantial; the engendering of an interpretive structure which yields an understanding of the situation and projects a resolution-reconstruction, to be monitored in its outcomes in practice.

The same Deweyan critique must now be seen to apply reflexively to classical American philosophy itself, and the question must now be reversed: What is the bearing of the failure of socialism upon the social philosophy of classical American philosophy? The difficulties of Deweyan social philosophy that have been exposed by the collapse of socialist statist economics and politics present “problems of men” which are themselves in need of Deweyan philosophical critique.

Both questions, as to the bearing of American philosophy upon the collapse of socialism and the reverse question, as to the bearing of the collapse of socialism upon classical American philosophy point to a third

question: What can be seen to be the role of classical American philosophy in the geopolitical world after the decline and death of socialism?

*Smugness, Sour Grapes, and the End of the Cold War*

It was only in the summer of 1989 that *The National Interest* gave us Francis Fukuyama's philosophical "The End of History?" announcing that Western liberal democracy has triumphed over socialist totalitarianism and is now universal as the final form of human ideology and government. The West has won, the long struggle for freedom is over, and history itself is coming to an end.

The West has won? Liberal democracy now becoming universal? The spectrum of response on the part of American journalistic opinion makers and academic intellectuals was predictable: smugness and triumphalism on the right, citing Reagan's Cold War policies for having hastened the erosion of the socialist economy and political order. Sour grapes and denial of defeat on the left, citing the economic and political costs of America's Cold War policies and the moral equivalence of the two imperialist powers. But American writers have been less concerned with the fallout in Eastern Europe and Russia from the defeat of socialism than with the consequences for America.

On the conservative niche in the spectrum, Charles Krauthammer looks back on the eighties as "the decade of the revival and triumph of the West."<sup>1</sup> And from the right, political theorist Jeane Kirkpatrick hails "the collapse of communism, the spread of democracy in Eastern Europe, the end of the Cold War and other good news. . . ." But this "good news" has been met, she says, with a barrage of repudiations "extraordinary for their passion, their confusion, and their pure malice" from commentators who have all along blamed the United States for the Cold War and are still embattled against U.S. policy in the Vietnam War.

Among the writers on the left who spurn the good news of the collapse of communism, the historian Christopher Lasch stands forth as the most intriguing. On June 10, 1990, the Institute for Policy Studies held a memorial colloquium for the historian William Appleman Williams, celebrated for his revisionist American history and his opposition to America's "containment" policy toward the Soviet Union. Lasch shocked and angered the audience by declaring: "We ought to admit the truth. . . that the West has won the Cold War—even if it goes against the grain, against our political inclinations. . . . We don't have to join the celebration of the free market to see that the masses in Eastern Europe and Russia no longer have much faith in socialism."<sup>2</sup> But by July 13, Lasch reversed himself on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*. The Soviet

Union has been defeated, he conceded, but the West has not won the Cold War, because the containment policy that destroyed the economy, domestic morale, and the world political leadership of the Soviets has had the same effect at home, driving America toward "secret policy organizations, the erosion of civil liberties, the stifling of political debate. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Masterfully, within a few paragraphs, Lasch has recanted his apostate insistence that the West has won, apologized to his revisionist colleagues and the memory of William Appleman Williams, and rallied the troops.

Although some commentators on the left hold America "responsible" for persisting in the Cold War which defeated Soviet socialism, and others, like Christopher Lasch, see America as a Cold War loser, Christopher Hitchens surpasses all others in the practice of denial by skeptically questioning whether communist totalitarianism (100,000,000 killed) ever really existed except in the rhetoric of American neoconservatives.<sup>4</sup> Such skeptical questioning is not without recent precedent: in the past decade questioning has begun as to whether the Holocaust (6,000,000 killed) ever actually existed except in the rhetoric of Jews.

And in the academic world, some scholars are examining the significance for the intellectual culture of Fukuyama's end-of-history-West-has-won thesis. Writing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Harvey Kaye, a professor of social change and development, argues that Fukuyama's claim of the universal victory of Western liberal democracy is a stratagem to create a neoconservative national consensus and a one-dimensional narrative of American history. "Thus, it appears all the more necessary," Professor Kay urges, "to recall the conception of historical practice that originally attracted so many of us to the discipline in the 60's and early 70's—a vision of critical scholarly studies and pedagogical activities linked to the experience and struggles of working people and the oppressed."<sup>5</sup>

Paradox: Socialism is dead in eastern Europe and Russia, the Communist bloc countries in which its ideas and economic and political practices held power. Why, then, is socialism vigorously alive in parts of capitalist America, as these rancorous debates about the Cold War make clear? Why, asks American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, have most left-wing political parties in the industrialized democracies been moving towards a free market economy and centrist politics—except for America, where socialist redistributionist and centralizing policies are still pursued by left-wing elements in the Democratic party and the universities?<sup>6</sup> How to explain paradoxical, exceptionalist America?

Lipset borrows an explanation from the sixties thinking of Richard Hofstadter and Lionel Trilling, that American socialist intellectuals' "attachment has been inspired and sustained more by a desire to be anti-establishment, to be adversarial toward bourgeois and national patriotic values than by a concern to implement specific political and social

programs." Under these circumstances, Lipset concludes, "evidence that Marxism does not deliver is largely irrelevant." But Lipset leaves unexplained this adversarial, antibourgeois stance of left intellectuals. Nor does Lipset take note of conservatives' current complaint that leftist intellectuals dominate the media and give support to the implementation of favored programs, contrary to his view that American intellectuals are not politically involved.

*The Contradictions of Modernity: American Romantic Transcendentalism and the Rise of Counter-Enlightenment Dissent*

Only in the larger context of the contradictions of Modernity can sense be made of the Cold War debates, the paradox of the death of socialism and its survival in America, and the significance of these "problems of men" for American pragmatism. The contradictions of Modernity have formed the horizon of the West since the middle of the nineteenth century, when the concepts of the Enlightenment tradition, deriving from Locke and Newton, were already being fiercely opposed by a Counter-Enlightenment, Romantic tradition, deriving from Rousseau and the Romantic German, English, and American poets and philosophers. The Enlightenment thought-style: universal human rationality as the source of political and scientific truth; unalienable natural rights of the individual to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness; government by consent of the governed; the rule of law and equality under the law; liberation, by reason and science, from myth, religion, dogma, tradition, and prejudice; and the sustaining of a civil society of free and open social and economic relations. These are the Enlightenment ideas from which Fukuyama's victorious Western liberal democracy is a twentieth-century descendant.

Missing from Fukuyama's optimistic Enlightenment picture of Modernity are the ideas of the Romantic Counter-Enlightenment—ideas which have opposed, rejected, scorned, and feared the power of Enlightenment thought and practices to discredit and displace traditional economic, political, religious, and ethnic modes of cultural and personal life.

The Counter-Enlightenment thought-style: in opposition to abstract reason, the greater human significance of spirit, will, imagination; in opposition to objective science, the paths to truth are found in subjectivity, the arts, and culture; in opposition to the political autonomy of the individual, and natural rights democracy, politics has its source in the group and is sustained by a statism of left or right; in opposition to the self-interest of the rational individual, the primacy of the needs and

aspirations of the community; in opposition to the achievement of a civil society and scientific and technological modernization, the concern of the Counter-Enlightenment is for the victims of Enlightenment civil society and modernization—the oppressed, the poor, the mentally or physically ill, minorities, rebels, revolutionaries, and martyrs.

Traditional nations of Europe began accommodating to the contradictions of Modernity during the nineteenth century, working out mixed modes of economics and politics within their respective historic situations, with traditional Britain evolving most clearly as a civil society in the Enlightenment style of modernity. Marx's mid-nineteenth-century philosophy was itself a mixed mode of Enlightenment science and human rights with Communist party statism. (It was twentieth-century Marxism-Leninism that became the totalitarian Other to Western liberalism.)

Unlike traditional nations, America was the first new nation, and its national and legal identity lay in Enlightenment philosophic truths of individual natural rights and constitutional democratic government, as these were Americanized in the unalienable natural rights of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and Madison's Constitution with its separation of powers and machinery of representative democracy. It was the Enlightenment foundations of the new nation which significantly set its course and set the stage for ineluctable Counter-Enlightenment dissent—the American version of the contradictions of Modernity.

In 1830 Tocqueville saw in America "the image of democracy itself," a passionate consensus in the embrace of liberty, equality of social condition, an atomistic individualism; these were accompanied by the tyranny of the majority over intellect and wealth, by a "virtuous materialism" as the prevailing morality, and an aversion to the intellectual pursuit of philosophy? Among the costs of the benefits of democracy was, he believed, that American democracy could not experience the elevation of mind, the scorn of material advantage, and the cultivation and love of the arts and philosophy which characterized the culture of the old French aristocracy. Tocqueville did not surmise that, at the very time of his pronouncement, there was arising in the vicinity of Concord, Massachusetts, the group of philosophers, poets, essayists, novelists, and political and cultural dissenters who became known as the Transcendentalists, affirming the very qualities which Tocqueville believed that Americans, in their egalitarianism and virtuous materialism, were destined to lack.

With the Transcendentalism of the 1830s–1850s the stream of European and British Romanticism entered the currents of American intellectual and political culture. Ralph Waldo Emerson, having been inspired by his encounters with the transforming powers of spirit conveyed by the Romantic, Counter-Enlightenment rhetoric of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle, invented himself and a new conception of the individual human being, a new American self, and a new Emerson:

Man is not a farmer, or a professor or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier.<sup>8</sup>

It is intellectually astonishing to discover the echo of Emerson's "American Scholar" of 1837 and its new conception of the human being in Marx's *The German Ideology* of 1845-46.

[Under communism] society regulates the general production, and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, raise cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.

In the Emerson of 1837 and the Marx of 1845 there is expressed the same Romantic conception of the infinitude of potentiality within the human spirit, and the same Counter-Enlightenment indictment of existing repressive social conditions. Emerson concludes this passage with a criticism of American society:

The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters,—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man.<sup>9</sup>

"The American Scholar" has often been identified as a cultural declaration of American independence from Europe and Britain:

We shall walk on our own feet, work with our own hands, speak our own minds.<sup>10</sup>

It is also a declaration of independence of the American individual from the Enlightenment horizon of Jefferson's self-evident truths and Madison's external machinery of government. In the countervailing conception of "The American Scholar" Emerson invented (created) himself and a new American human being, and for both a new vocation, a secular calling to discern and teach "the other side," the truths of the inward path, of a spiritualized nature, a sanctified dailiness, and a unifying "Oversoul." And finally it may be seen that "The American Scholar" is a declaration of the entrance of American social thought and philosophy into the critique of the conflicting interpretive structures of Modernity, into what Dewey saw as the ongoing critical role of philosophy in civilization.

*Progressivism, Pragmatism, and Counter-Enlightenment Politics*

From the time of the Transcendentalists onward, their emerging Counter-Enlightenment thought became and was to remain a paradigmatic feature of American intellectual and popular culture. The Counter-Enlightenment dissent for which the Enlightenment foundation had set the stage had appeared in Transcendentalism and entered the enduring American expression of Modernity. Romantic Counter-Enlightenment modes of thought moved beyond the Transcendentalists' drift toward an antinomian mysticism and focused instead on a battery of social, economic, political, and cultural criticisms of the nation. Counter-Enlightenment criticism, varying with the historical situation, appears in the following characteristic modes: critique of abstract principles, by contrast with expressive incorporativeness; critique of absolute truths, values, norms, by contrast with Romantic process, change, growth; critique of the competitive capitalist economy, by contrast with the egalitarianism expressed by the democratic polity; critique of rights-based, atomistic individualism, by contrast with social unification or some type of communitarianism; the critique of American life and personality as diminished or impoverished by the complex of American institutions; criticisms of the absence in American culture of aspects of transcendence, or of a unifying civil religion, or moral uplift, or redemption.

In the Progressive Era, from the turn of the twentieth century through the pre-World War I decades, Counter-Enlightenment criticism became concretized and sharply politicized. A national crisis had mounted in the face of the acceleration of social and economic change: the post-Civil War rapid expansion of industrialization; the rise of a working-class population, augmented by huge waves of immigration; the growth of great corporate wealth, increasingly in collusion with federal and local government officials; urbanization and the concomitant disappearance of the old Protestant small-town culture and family-owned businesses; and the blockage to reform which decisions of the Supreme Court and the Constitution itself appeared to present. The dislocations produced by monopolistic capitalist forces of modernization brought into being not only the rebellion of the Progressive movement but a rethinking of the continued adequacy of the American Enlightenment tradition and a turning, again, to Counter-Enlightenment, European modes of thought (Hegelian, neo-Hegelian, Marxist, Schopenhauerian, Nietzschean, Bergsonian, Freudian) as an alternative way of understanding the problems of modernity. Classical American philosophy arose in the attempt to integrate the cultural styles of modernity, Enlightenment and Romantic Counter-Enlightenment, into a philosophy for America, whose national and legal identity was in Enlightenment truth.

Peirce, Royce, James, and Dewey attempted, each in his own way, to provide a fruitful reconciliation of the cognitive structures of Modernity which would offer a public philosophy for America. Yet only Dewey had a grasp of the formidable undertaking implicit in American pragmatism: to interpret the historical frameworks of Modernity in relation to their engendering problematic situations, to identify their consequences in historical practice, and to explore the prospects for their integration.

Dewey's writings constitute a remarkably successful exhibition of utilizing the major Counter-Enlightenment philosophical strategies to problematize the cognitive, moral, and political structures of traditional Enlightenment America. The Romantic category of unification dominates the developmental line of Dewey's thought from his early Hegelianism to his philosophic responses to the national crises of the 1890s and the 1930s. But the potent unification offered by Hegelian Spirit is displaced by an amplified Darwinian nature; and with the rise of the social sciences, nature is in turn displaced in Dewey's thought by "the social" as "the most inclusive category." In all versions, unification is linked to process: Hegelian, Darwinian, historicist; and process functions for Dewey as a universal solvent. There follows the celebrated Deweyan rejection of dichotomies (gaps, gulfs, dualisms, discontinuities) and absolutes ("fixities," finalities, "antecedent independent realities," the nonoperational, noninstrumental, nontestable). Dualisms and dichotomies (between organism and environment, subject and object, individual and society, is and ought) are overcome as separate structures by linking processes of interaction and transaction. Scientific, political, moral, and aesthetic experience are themselves differentiated only as distinctive contexts within "nature," "the social," or "culture." "Fixities" in all areas of thought and practice succumb to the solvent of process by being construed as functions of changing events, or as obsolete resolutions of past problematic situations, or as hypotheses to be tested.

Dewey may be seen to have swung away from the Emersonian Romanticism of the infinite potentialities of the self to the communal Romanticism of the collectivity.<sup>11</sup> Emerson's redemptive mystical unification of the spiritual self with nature and the Over-Soul was naturalized by Dewey into the unification of the socialized self with the community and the processes of nature. Yet the same redemptive symbolism of a sanctified unification is persistently evoked in Dewey's rhetoric of the uniting of the self with the life of the community and the ongoing affairs of nature. From its Transcendentalist inception the voice of American Counter-Enlightenment from Emerson to Dewey carries the themes of transcendence, communion, the sanctification of human life, covenant, mission, and redemption—themes lost in Enlightenment Modernity and generative of a powerful political critique against it.<sup>12</sup>



In *The Public and Its Problems*, *Individualism Old and New*, *Liberalism and Social Action*, Dewey's political philosophy reached its developmental peak. These volumes were written as journal articles or as public lectures during the boom years of the economy following World War I and the subsequent Great Depression, and within a political culture under the pervasive influence of socialist theory and the visible presence of Soviet socialist practice. Dewey rigorously formulates his political philosophy by attacking the inadequacies of traditional Enlightenment conceptions of the individual and government in the light of massive twentieth-century social and economic change.

"...Rugged individualism is praised as the glory of American life," Dewey reflects. "But such words have little relation to the moving facts of that life," since "the United States has steadily moved from an earlier pioneer individualism to a condition of corporate capitalism" (LW 5:58). Among the "eternal truths" of early liberalism was the conception of the individual as "ready made, already possessed, and needing only the removal of certain legal restrictions to come into full play" (LW 11:30). But since early liberalism was pre-social scientific, it failed to see "the dependence in fact of individuals upon social conditions..."

Such thinking treats individualism as if it were something static, having a uniform content. It ignores the fact that the mental and moral structure of individuals... change with every great change in social constitution. (LW 5:80)

Under the domination of "manufacturing, transportation, distribution and finance" in an interlocking corporate capitalism, Dewey asks, "Where is the wilderness which now beckons creative energy and affords untold opportunity to initiative and vigor?" (LW 5:80).

"The crisis in liberalism" stems from the need to develop a new form of "social organization" in the face of opposition from a regime which is "the agent of a dominant economic class" and from the continued moral influence of the old laissez-faire individualism. Dewey argues that "liberalism must now be prepared... to socialize the forces of production." A liberalism that is sincere in its creed of "free, self-initiated expression... must will the means of achieving its ends":

Regimentation of material and mechanical forces is the only way by which the mass of individuals can be released from regimentation and consequent suppression of their cultural possibilities. (LW 11:63)

Dewey seeks to gain acceptance for socialism by identifying it as a type of corporatism such as already exists within capitalist enterprise and in the "organized intelligence" of the natural sciences. We are moving,

he says, from an individualistic to a collectivist liberalism, from a capitalist to a socialist corporatism, from a socialism that is capitalist to a socialism that is public.

We are in for some kind of socialism, call it by whatever name we please, and no matter what it will be called when it is realized. (LW 5:98)

It is of course to be hoped, he cautions, that the change will be undertaken by voluntary agreement rather than by governmental coercion or by violence. The outcome would surely signify the "doom" of capitalism, indeed "no phase of our culture would be unaffected." The function of "organized intelligence" would be carried out by a

coordinating and directive council in which captains of industry and finance would meet with representatives of labor and public officials to plan the regulation of industrial activity [and] would signify that we had entered constructively and voluntarily upon the road which Soviet Russia is traveling with so much attendant destruction and coercion. (LW 5:98)

What then will be the new individualism, brought forth by the new political, economic, and cultural revolution, pursuing now the affairs of human life within a planned society? Dewey does not shirk the question:

How shall the individual refind himself in an unprecedentedly new social situation, and what qualities will the new individualism exhibit? (LW 5:81)

Dewey's answer: "I am not anxious to depict the form which this emergent individualism will assume." A mentality which will be "congruous with the new social corporateness" cannot be predicted in advance of social change (LW 5:89).

Dewey ends *Individualism: Old and New* by invoking Emerson's Romantic natural supernaturalism, the discovery of transcendence in the everyday world, and the conception of the self-creating and world-creating possibilities of the human spirit.

To gain an integrated individuality, each of us needs to cultivate his own garden. But . . . our garden is the world, in the angle at which it touches our own manner of being. By accepting the corporate and industrial world in which we live, and by thus fulfilling the precondition for interaction with it, we, who are also parts of the moving present, create ourselves as we create an unknown future. (LW 5:123)

In the fateful year of 1989 with the failure and collapse of socialism in the European countries in which it has prevailed, Dewey's social gospel and its scarcely concealed Marxist socialism appears to be the teaching of a false Messiah, except when placed in its historical situation. Enlightenment structures became for him, as for characteristic social critique in Modernity, the obstacles to social development. Dewey's Counter-Enlightenment negative criticisms attempt to delegitimize and desacralize the liberal tradition by examining the fixity of its "eternal truths" in the light of the limitations of its genesis and the distortions of its consequences. His sharpest criticisms are of the "old" individualism, laissez-faire economics, the incongruence between the professed ideals of traditional liberalism, visible in the judiciary and executive branches of government, and the existing corporate structures of industry, trade, finance, and politics. His call for a correcting socialism does not leave standing the right to private property, political and economic liberty, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, universal suffrage, the Supreme Court, the institutions of civil society, or the structures of the capitalist economy.

On the positive side of the Counter-Enlightenment mode of thought, Dewey presents the vast Romantic appeal of unification, the abandonment of self-interest, the redesigning of all aspects of culture to reflect the binding of the collective corporate organic totality, and the control of the nation through the central planning of "organized intelligence." But no provision is made for the continuation of civil society, those institutions (such as trade unions, political parties, social movements, free and autonomous churches and universities, independent industrial groups) which act as agents of the people and are not run by the state; nor for the independence of human rights from the purview and control of the state.<sup>13</sup> No constitution replaces the Constitution of the United States which Dewey reduced from its sanctified fixity to the status of an empirical hypothesis (thus endangering the bulwark of the civil rights movement), nor is there a replacement for universal suffrage which he views as flawed by its individualistic presuppositions. No answer is available to the crucial political query: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* The Romantic spontaneity of self-creation is subordinated to the creation of the new society. But the Romantic aspiration to transcendence and redemption in the new society is left without content; only its polar opposite is clear, the proposed statist control by the planners of the polity, the economy, and the culture.

Despite the fervor of his Marxist rhetoric, Dewey retained the role of interpreter and integrator of the contradictions of Modernity by the number of significant elements he accepted from the Enlightenment side of Modernity. Science and democracy (both Romanticized) provide the pillars of his philosophy; scientific method is the sole adequate method of inquiry;

science and technology have the power to reconstruct the world; the forces of modernization, industrialization, bureaucratization, and urbanization are accepted by Dewey, along with the importance and dignity of work.<sup>14</sup> He had no Romantic/Marxist contempt for the bourgeoisie, nor did he seek to bring America down; he sought in these writings only a peaceful, voluntary revolution in America along the road which Soviet Russia was traveling with violence and coercion.

With the collapse of both communism and fascism, the two major embodiments of extremist Romantic politics, we seem to have learned that national statist installations of such Counter-Enlightenment ideas are human disasters. The failure of socialist economics and politics is now "writ large" for all the world to see, and exercises a potentially chastening influence on aspiring socialist-leaning political tendencies in America and abroad. As Barrington Moore, Perry Anderson, Jürgen Habermas, and most Western Marxists, have admitted to a new "chastened" Marxism in view of the failure of Marxism in its predictions and in the atrocities of its practices, so Dewey's quasi-Marxist socialism may be seen in retrospect as requiring an acknowledged chastening. And American left-liberalism which is committed to the pursuit of redistribution and centralized state controls, as Lipset points out, may be seen as still "unchastened" by the European experience with socialist redistributionism and statism.

### *Socialism as Counter-Enlightenment Symbolism*

By the last decade of the twentieth century, Enlightenment America had developed a mixed, "welfare-capitalist" economy and a "civil rights" democracy. These changes came in response to a decade of intertwined social movements. Mounting social complexities fused with the powerful Counter-Enlightenment emotional appeal of community, contempt for monetary greed, shame in the presence of poverty, sickness, disabilities, illiteracy, and discrimination against minorities and women. But although most of the new social policies are adaptations of European socialism, they are not identified as such in America, but only within the context of the Enlightenment-Counter-Enlightenment contradictions of American liberal democracy. The right and the political center selectively accept these policies as rational, utilitarian reforms; the left sees them as redemptive of the sufferings caused by the American social system.

Thus the announcement of the death of socialism is premature. Defeated in the Cold War, and a self-confessed failure, socialism as a political and economic system can be pronounced dead. Socialism lives, however, as a symbol of the Counter-Enlightenment thought-style, a symbol of all perceived truths and moral values which the prevailing

Enlightenment-derived liberal democracy undermines or ignores. As a symbol of Romantic, Counter-Enlightenment Modernity, socialism draws out and identifies the negativities thrown up by liberal democracy: its intellectual limitations, its spiritual and religious emptiness, its moral impoverishment, its social and psychological fragmentation, its marginalization of unassimilable groups. Contradicting these negativities, socialism symbolizes the search for the self, for community, and for spiritual transcendence; the concern for minorities, the weak and oppressed; and a sensitivity to cruelties and to pain. "Socialism" is figurative language for the Counter-Enlightenment perspective upon the realities of Modernity. It is an umbrella term for 200 years of diverse Counter-Enlightenment protest in Western democracies. So long as Fukuyama's long peace of liberal democracy prevails, so long will the Counter-Enlightenment expressions of socialism also prevail and find their way into cultural and political life.

But there is no long peace. With the end of the Cold War another phase of the contradictions of Modernity has quickly arisen with the problems of the premodern Arab and Muslim world of the Middle East. The global oil dependency of the industrialized nations is confronted by Middle East nationalistic, religious, and tribal hostilities united only in the hatred and fear of modernization and the West.

Under the caption "How the 'West' Was Lost," essayist Meg Greenfield questions whether, after the West has won, the symbolic significance of America has not been lost. Truer to Hegel than is Fukuyama, Greenfield queries, ironically, that in winning the Cold War have we not lost the "Other" that we need for our self-definition, a sense of who we are? But the "Other," it appears, is not lost. At home in America the Other is present as the Counter-Enlightenment symbolism of socialism, tied as its shadow to the historic Enlightenment identity of America. Abroad, the Other hovers as the potentially global confrontation of the aspirations of Third World peoples with America as the national embodiment of liberal democracy. It is not Fukuyama's liberal democratic peace that is endless, but the horizon of the contradictions of Modernity in which we live.

### *Conclusion: American Philosophy and Modernity*

Among the philosophies still flourishing in the Western world only American pragmatism, perhaps because of its Enlightenment founding, has a sharpened sense both of the Enlightenment thought-structures and of Counter-Enlightenment critique. It is the only philosophy which aspires (as does Habermas, alone among the Europeans) to bring the contradictions of Modernity "under one roof." This aspect of classical American

philosophy sheds light upon the questions which introduced this essay. American philosophy, specifically the Deweyan paradigm of "inquiry" by way of the problematic situation, its complex genesis, the interpretive structure engendered, and the identifiable consequences present a model for the study of the collapse of socialism which draws upon explanation and understanding, hermeneutics and social science.

Secondly, Deweyan social philosophy may itself be critiqued by this paradigm, as the present chapter exemplifies. The reflexive use of Deweyan critique is itself a test of its instrumentality.

Most significant is the aspect of American philosophy in which it may be seen to be the philosophic interpreter of Modernity. American philosophy arose with the attempt to interpret and integrate the historical framework of Modernity in its Enlightenment universality of human rights, representative democracy, civil society, science and technology, and the Romantic expressiveness of personal and group life in subjectivity, community, transcendence, and redemption. Although bound to the Enlightenment in its origins as "the first new nation," America, because of that circumstance, is open to the Counter-Enlightenment mode of dissent. Despite the limitations of American "exceptionalism," American philosophy may now serve as a resource and model for Central and Eastern European intellectual culture as it reaches out from totalitarian socialism to Enlightenment liberal democracy—toward the reappropriation and unification of the long horizon of the contradictions of Modernity.

#### Notes

1. *Washington Post*, November 24, 1989.
2. *Washington Post*, June 12, 1990.
3. *New York Times*, July 13, 1990.
4. *Harper's Magazine*, July 1990.
5. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 25, 1989.
6. *The National Interest*, Summer 1990.
7. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. R. Heffner (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 32.
8. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," in *Selected Writings of Emerson*, ed. D. McQuade (New York: The Modern Library, 1981), p. 46.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
11. See John J. McDermott, "Spires of Influence: The Importance of Emerson for Classical American Philosophy," in *Streams of Experience: Reflections on the History and Philosophy of American Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986).

12. See, for example, the concluding passages of Dewey's *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920) and *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922). Also see Thelma Z. Lavine, "Pragmatism and the Constitution in the Culture of Modernity," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 20, 1 (Winter 1984), and "Individuation and Unification in Dewey and Sartre," in *Doctrine and Experience*, ed. Stephen G. Potter, S.J. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988).

13. See Sir Ralf Dahrendorf, "Interview," *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Spring 1990).

14. See Thelma Z. Lavine, "John Dewey and the Founders: Human Nature and Politics," *Works and Days: Essays in the Socio-Historical Dimensions of Literature and the Arts* 3, 2 (Fall 1985), pp. 53-75.