# Book Reviews

**The Purpose of American Politics.** Hans J. Morgenthau. Knopf, New York, 1960. 368 pp. $4.50.

The purpose of American politics, says Hans Morgenthau, is "equality in freedom." This not very novel notion he examines in great detail and with an excess of subtlety and sophistication. The "present crisis of American politics," says Morgenthau, "is like its predecessors, essentially a crisis of the national purpose." Our times are out of joint not because our policies are bad but because "these policies have lost their organic connection with the innermost purposes of the nation." Although he does not say so, Morgenthau seems to imply that, in spite of frantic efforts to adapt our politics to the demands and conditions of contemporary civilization, we fail mainly "because we are no longer as sure as we used to be of what America stands for. . . ." This is the more surprising since the whole experience of America has been a quest for equality in freedom.

We continue to invoke the gods of *laissez faire* and an inbred hostility to political power at a time when both our domestic life and our central place in the society of nations demand the exercise of power if we are to achieve our historic purpose. A negativist posture toward political power was an inevitable consequence of the liberal or democratic struggle against a rigidly stratified society dominated by a hereditary elite. As Morgenthau observes, the "original purpose of democracy was the protection of the people from excessive and arbitrary power, not the exercise of governmental power itself." The triumph of majoritarian principles (however) has perverted the spirit of classical democracy by making public opinion not merely the source of governmental legitimacy but the "arbiter of policy with whose wishes the government must comply."

This new government by majority rather than government by consent of the majority has, according to Morgenthau, had a devastating effect upon the decision-making process. It has substituted the transient wishes of unstable numerical majorities for objective truth as the basis of public policy. It has impaired and placed in jeopardy those constitutional and moral safeguards designed to protect minority groups and the individual against the tyranny of the majority. And it has enfeebled and obscured both political power and responsibility by substituting an egalitarian for a hierarchal system of decision-making. The popular plebiscite, the committee system, and the public opinion poll have all but replaced the hierarchy of responsible legislative and executive officers in the determination of public policy. However legitimate the committee system may be in the legislative process, it is an abomination when it invades the executive branch, for the hallmark of government by committee is "that it shifts responsibility from an individual to a faceless collectivity."

Paradoxically, the triumph of majoritarian democracy leads not to majority rule as a stable and continuing source of power but to rule by organized minorities and to special interest groups exerting pressure upon both executive and legislative decision-makers. Even the major political parties through which conflicts over men and measures are theoretically resolved have become little more than electoral devices for conducting popularity contests among rival candidates without posing any significant issues of public policy. Pressure politics thus replaces party politics, and any meaningful responsibility for public policy is driven underground to be lost in a labyrinth of rival interest groups, committees, and influence peddlers. This functional fragmentation of power and responsibility is exacerbated, if not made possible, by institutional arrangements such as the constitutional separation of powers and the establishment of independent or quasi-independent administrative agencies.

The separation of powers, designed by the framers of the Constitution to impose restraints upon transient numerical majorities (a purpose which Morgenthau presumably would applaud), has in fact operated, he says, not so much to prevent the tyranny of popular majorities as to weaken the executive in his role of rational and responsible political leader. To compound the debilitating effects of the separation of powers, the disintegration of the executive power has been further advanced by the proliferation of administrative agencies over which the President has only formal control, if indeed he can be said to have even that. "The debility of the executive power caused by its inner fragmentation," says Morgenthau, "invites attack from the concentrations of private power, especially in the economic sphere." The result is a "new feudalism" which thwarts the majority will, as represented in Congress, even as it defies the executive leadership of the President.

### State versus Private Power

Obviously a government so enfeebled by internal fragmentation and by external pressures from a thousand rival interests, and assailed by the divided and quixotic counsel of transient, ill-informed and fickle popular majorities, falls short of what America needs in a world of recurring, if not continuous, crises. What may have been adequate in an isolated pastoral society is no longer even tolerable, if the United States is to realize its underlying purpose of freedom in equality, not merely at home but in the world or at least in that part of the world not yet committed to a different purpose. "The cure," says Morgenthau, "is a state strong enough to hold its own against the concentrations of private power." For in the realization of our national purpose, the government must take the lead and a "government hemmed in by the feudalism of its bureaucracy and . . . the concentrations of private power and paralyzed by its fear of public opinion cannot lead. A people that fears public power more than private power, that values the private interest more than the public, and that judges the actions of government by what public opinion wants rather than by objective standards, cannot follow. The restoration of the national purpose then requires a reorientation of the national outlook, a change in our national style."

More specifically, we must restore the Presidency to its rightful place as

the source and center of national power and leadership. This can be done not by hemming him in with more and more assistants and managers but by cutting through the bureaucratic wilds to establish effective channels of communication and control leading to the White House. Yet even when this is done the President will need those qualities of greatness which enabled Washington and Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln, Wilson and FDR to surmount other crises in other times.

Morgenthau has written cogently and eloquently about the most important problem of our time. There is much in his analysis to which I for one would take exception, and I find myself more in accord with his prescription than with his prognosis. The evil effects of the Separation of Powers, the alleged triumph of majoritarian democracy at the expense of individual and minority rights, the assumption that in America objective truth has been replaced by public opinion are but a few of Morgenthau's propositions which I believe to be overdrawn. But his statement of the central purpose of American politics is unexceptionable. Moreover his analysis of the relation of this purpose to vertical and horizontal mobility, social stratification, our unhappy venture as a colonial power, and our inescapable involvement in world politics is clear, subtle, and persuasive. It is a book to be read and pondered with care and meditation.

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**Social Structure in Southeast Asia.** *Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology*, No. 29. George P. Murdock, Ed. Quadrangle Books, Chicago, Ill.; Tavistock Publications, London, 1960. ix + 182 pp. $5.

This publication consists of a collection of ten analytic studies of the kinship and social organization of selected peoples of Southeast Asia. The papers were written by anthropologists for specialists in social structure and Southeast Asian studies, not for the curious reader looking only for general information or a brief overview of this critical area. Nine of the contributions are versions of papers presented in the Symposium on Social Structure in Southeast Asia at the Ninth Pacific Science Congress held in Bangkok, Thailand, during November 1957. The groups covered are a miscellany of so-called primitive tribes, peasants, and geographic segments of the large civilizations which make up this heterogeneous area. The papers are "The Mnong Gar of central Vietnam" (G. Condominas), "The Sagada Igorots of northern Luzon" (F. Eggan), "The eastern Subanun of Mindanao" (C. O. Frake), "The Iban of western Borneo" (J. D. Freeman), "The Javanese of south central Java" (R. M. Koentjaraningrat), "The Sinhalese of the dry zone of northern Ceylon" (E. R. Leach), "The aboriginal peoples of Formosa" (T. Mabuchi), "Supplementary notes on the Formosan aborigines" (Wei Hwei-Lin), and "The Magpie Miao of southern Szechuan" (Ruey Yih-Fu). Each is an important contribution to the anthropological coverage of Southeast Asia, which is still very spotty.

For an introduction to the volume the editor, George P. Murdock, who organized the symposium in Bangkok, has written a general theoretical statement "Cognatic forms of social organization." In this he first reviews all known types of kin groups in accordance with the system of classification he developed in his book *Social Structure* (Macmillan, New York, 1949); he then turns to the problem of bilateral or nonunilinear types which are common in Southeast Asia. Murdock draws upon his own vast knowledge of the social structure of peoples throughout the world and upon unpublished papers and discussions from a seminar on nonunilineal kinship systems held at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (Stanford University) in which he participated. A thorough discussion of the terminological and conceptual confusion which exists in this sector is followed by a proposed new classification system and a discussion of the principles of organization which define these types of groups.

Where previously all of these kinds of kin groups were more or less lumped into a single category and described by a variety of terms such as *ambilineal, utrolateral, multilinear*, and *ramage* in addition to *bilateral* and *nonunilinear*, Murdock distinguishes three types of kin groups which he calls *bilateral, ambilineal*, and *quasi-unilineal*. For the bilateral and ambilineal types he proposes the covering term of *cognatic* in order to contrast them with the more familiar unlineal types. The descriptive contributions of this volume are compared within this classificatory framework, as are a number of correlative features of social structure and kinship terminologies which seem to occur regularly with each type no matter where the types are found in the world.

As a symposium this volume is noteworthy in that the descriptive papers are of exceptionally high caliber and the introduction not only ties the papers together nicely but also goes beyond the scope of the presentations to make a contribution to the general theory of social structure.

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**The Nature of Animal Colours.** H. Munro Fox and Gwynne Vevers. Macmillan, New York, 1960. xii + 246 pp. Illus. $6.50.

Not since 1953, when the other pigment-conscious Fox (Denis L.) brought out *Animal Biochromes*, has there been a convenient summing up of the causes of the hues we see in animals. In this new volume the authors provide a grand tour, conducted in a pleasantly readable style, and also a tantalizing invitation to do something about the pigments still awaiting investigation. A whole chapter is given over to laboratory experiments suitable for whetting the enthusiasm of students who might then go on to solve unknowns.

The table of contents may dismay the nonbiochemists, for the chapters are arranged to consider compounds in natural groups: melanin; sclerotin, ommochromes, Tyrian purple; carotenoids; hemoglobin, chlorocruorin; hemochromogens, porphyrins, bilins; hemocyanin, hemerythrin, hemovanadin; quinones; guanine, pterins, flavins; and a final miscellany. In none, however, will the nonbiochemist flounder in structural formulas. An appended chapter, "Synopsis of animal colours," clarifies the record by considering pigments by hue.

All through the book, the pages are sequined with esoteric bits of delightful information: fossilized melanin (150 million years old) used as ink in illustrating a scientific account of the extinct squids that made the pigment; colored sweat in human beings and red sweat in the hippopotamus; black rats turning gray one month after being given phenylthiocarbamide (the "PTC" of taste-test paper) in their food; the