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Steven F. Hayward, *Patriotism Is not Enough: Harry Jaffa, Walter Berns, and the Argument that Redefined American Conservatism*

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Geoffrey M. Vaughan

The academic study of American politics is divided into methodological subgroups and those specializing in the individual branches of the federal government or different levels of government, such as state and local politics. There are also subgroups devoted to identities based on race and sex or gender orientation. The American Political Science Association recognizes a large number of specialized groups. None, however, are labeled liberal, progressive, or conservative. As with all fields in the social sciences, political scientists as a group lean largely to the left. Yet in contrast to other fields, there is a significant number of conservatives studying politics and they have organized themselves largely along the differences between the two major protagonists in this book.

Stephen F. Hayward has produced a remarkable account of a spirited and influential development in the study of the American regime. As the subtitle confirms, it is a combination of an intellectual biography focused largely on Harry Jaffa and Walter Berns and a story of their influence on American conservatism. But it is more. It is also a sociology of a significant portion of academic political science for the second half of the twentieth century. Hayward brings in many authors and teachers to describe the development of not only American conservatism but, more specifically, the conservative study of America.

The personal story of the friendship and enmity between Jaffa and Berns lends a dramatic touch to the story Hayward tells, a drama that would be absent from most other studies of academia. In a twist no novelist could get away with, the two men even died on the same day.

There was much drama before that, of course. For instance, Berns was one of the Cornell faculty who had to flee to Canada in the wake of a student takeover of the campus. Surprisingly, Jaffa never had to flee anywhere despite being notoriously acerbic, especially in print. He would let nothing go and would never drop a dispute. He had more former fiends than most people ever have friends. And so it is not surprising that, after years of friendship and mutual admiration, Berns asked, "Who will rid us of this pest of a priest?"

Over a preface and ten chapters Hayward takes up three topics that were common to the careers of Jaffa and Berns: statesmanship, patriotism, and equality. Both men devoted their lives to studying these and teaching their students and readers to take them seriously. What makes them "conservative" is that they argued that the first two are necessary for a modern republican democracy to survive, and that the third is a problematic term that cannot be accepted uncritically. What divided them was the nature of the equality problem.

Hayward provides a succinct and clear distinction between "statesmanship" and "leadership," its contemporary, progressive cousin. "Modern 'leadership' is distinct from the older understanding of statesmanship," explains Hayward. "A progressive leader sees ahead, and thus forces the pace of change, whereas statesmanship is more anchored in the understanding of the limits of politics." Both Jaffa and Berns would agree with this statement, as would almost all the other authors mentioned in this book, as well as the conservative movement and its two subjects took a not always leading part. Statesmanship is central to the conservative movement, one of the reasons the current President has not been embraced by it, and is antithetical to the liberal or progressive understanding of politics. Not only does it contain the word "man"--mercifully, "statespersonship" will never catch on--it is premised on the notion of political limits, something progressivism does not abide.

A tension within American conservatism is that the recognition of limits can sit uneasily with the idea of patriotism. If statesmanship demands accommodation with something distasteful or even immoral, slavery, to choose a not-at-all random example, the recognition of limits means permitting evil. Can one love what is flawed? As individuals, we must hope so. At the political level the question is more difficult, and largely separates liberals from conservatives. Michelle Obama famously remarked that she felt proud of her country only after the election of her husband to the presidency. One can certainly understand why she might say that, given the history of racial injustice her family undoubtedly suffered. But it is not the only response one might have. One might, as many on both the left and right do, hold that America is worthy of affection precisely because, even when it fails to live up to its ideals, it is founded on those ideals. Jefferson's agonized reflections on slavery are a good example. Jaffa, however, took a very different position.

According to Jaffa, the United States of America in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution is not simply a good regime, nor even the best possible regime under the circumstances. America is the best regime, *simpliciter*. There never has been, is not now, nor ever shall be a better form of government, world without end. The religious invocation is not an accident. As Hayward admirably explains, for Jaffa the insights of Classical political thought were fundamentally improved by the insights of Christianity. It must be said, if it needs saying, that Jaffa was not a Christian. Nevertheless, he went so far as to claim that Aristotle, if he had been born during the Christian Era, not only could have but would have written Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*. The reason why is Hayward's third topic, and the most contentious in the debate between Jaffa and Berns--and most everyone else, for that matter--namely, equality.

The two most important points of reference for Jaffa were Abraham Lincoln and, through him, the Declaration. Both, due to the influence of Christianity, assumed and asserted the equality of human beings. Neither was egalitarian in the ideological sense, that is, Jaffa took neither to mean equality must be produced by the efforts of the state. He did not consider equality something to be grasped, but the foundation of our rights. As the Declaration puts it, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Berns, as Hayward explains, was attracted to the next sentence: "That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed..." Jaffa put his emphasis on equality whereas Berns put his on securing rights. In other words, their dispute is over the meaning of the commas in the first sentence quoted above and, thereby, the relationship between the clauses. Are the self-evident truths the three subsequent ideas: equality, unalienable rights, and the three specifics? Alternatively, is it self-evidently true that men are equal *insofar as* they are endowed with inalienable rights? A great deal hinges on the distinction.

There is much more to be learned from this excellent book and anyone interested in the exceptional political culture of America would be well served by reading it. Why is American conservatism so different from that of other countries, even its closest neighbor, Canada? Why do Christians find so much to admire in a Constitution that seems to see religion as only something neither to be infringed nor established? Might the Founders, in the words so dear to the late Peter Augustine Lawler, "build better than they knew?" And why is patriotism not enough?

Steven Hayward has done a great service in bringing together such a significant list of important issues in an enjoyable and readable style. The general public will find a serious account of major figures in the development of conservatism along with the themes that have both united and divided them. Professional political scientists will enjoy reading stories of people they knew, knew about, or read. The only imbalance in the book is that Harry Jaffa does dominate the story, as perhaps he always did. Nevertheless, this is a worthy tribute to the two scholars and patriots who shined so much light on the country they loved. Hayward praises both without being hagiographic and yet exposes flaws and shortcomings. Perhaps it is most fitting to say of the book that moderation in the service of memorializing is no vice.

Geoffrey M. Vaughan teaches Political Science at Assumption College in Worcester MA. He has published on political philosophy and literature from Aristophanes to Habermas. His edited volume on Leo Strauss and His Catholic Readers will be published by the Catholic University of America Press and he is working on a book on the role of the philosopher-king in modern political thought.

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