

forth the record of this unfortunate episode of history.

It is true that history is in large measure the result of economic determinism. It is likewise true that the clash of ideologies has had a profound influence on the course of history. But the reader of Dr. Petrov's study—and I hope there will be many—cannot fail to be impressed by the impact of the human factor even in the broadest and most complicated world problems. The character and personality of human beings are a major factor in crucial decisions made by governments. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin; Hull and Welles; Truman and Acheson—all influenced history not merely as instruments of economic policies or ideological ideals, but because of their character and personality. In his own fields of action the personality of Arthur Bliss Lane—his zeal, energy, honesty and patriotism—undoubtedly had an effect on the handling by his government of the problems with which he was confronted. This effect—quite distinct from any results achieved—was a healthy one.

Reviewed by PAUL C. DANIELS

The Void and the Vision

Between Nothingness and Paradise,

by Gerhart Niemeyer, *Baton Rouge:*

Louisiana State University Press, 1971.

vii + 226 pp. \$8.95.

THE EXISTENTIAL SOCIETY stands between the concept of nothingness in the revolutionary total critique, and the dreams of perfection in some new order of the human world. Those who are neither concerned with destructive rejection, nor with some form of perfectionism, have accepted the actual society in which we live, though they may have standards of reform or im-

provement which are impractical. What Professor Niemeyer is dealing with, thus, is not a pragmatic or empirical nothingness. His examination of the total critique is grounded in a philosophical tradition, which in its criticism of modern Gnosticism finds its exemplars in Jewish prophets, Socrates, and St. Augustine. These men provide a "philo-ontic total critique that is neither nihilistic in thought nor destructive in practice." In a longer study one would naturally expect a more detailed examination of the pragmatics of the contemporary state. However, there was apparently neither the space nor the inclination in the author's mind at this time for such an enterprise.

The author begins his study of the revolutionary total critique of society in the French enlightenment. The writers he studies are Meslier, Morelly, and Abbé de Mably. This leads into an examination of one of the first of the great revolutionaries, Gracchus Babeuf (executed in 1797) and his followers. After this, the writers who rejected the momentary society in the name of the laws of history provide another approach to the golden future, that is Turgot, Condorcet, Fourier, the Hegelian chiliasts, and Marxism in general. Says Niemeyer:

Marx's critique has demonstrated a pervasive power, to be sure; other modern total critiques as, for instance, the national myth, Freudian psychoanalysis, existentialism, have found it impossible long to continue their negation without entering into some kind of an alliance or merger with Marxism. There is, therefore, some justification in treating Marx's critique as the core of the total critique of society in modern times, so that the investigation of its structure could well serve purposes of insight into other types of total critique.

A study of "Totalitarian Activism" follows the analysis of Marx. Here we have mainly a study of Lenin in his relations with his contemporaries in Russia and Germany. When one reaches this chapter in the

history of Marxism-Leninism, we reach a point of acute controversy in the meanings of the major revolutionary philosophy of our times. Personally, I am disappointed that Professor Niemeyer did not go beyond Lenin into the embittered question of whether socialism after Lenin continued the Marx-Engels tradition, or whether the revolution that exists today as socialism-communism would have been accepted by Marx and Engels as a true heir of the faith they created. This is important because it is against the existential communism that the free societies struggle. It is on the basis of Marxism-Leninism that the hostility to "imperialism," *i.e.*, the United States, has been maintained and spread throughout the modern world, including the treasonable theft of secret documents from the United States government.

In general, it might seem that the author has sympathy for the German Social Democrats, who until the triumph of Marxism-Leninism, were largely regarded as the authentic Marxians of the Western world. For instance, in discussing the Aristotelian idea of a political order oriented toward the common good, Niemeyer observes that "Kautsky succeeded in conceiving of such a political order and Lenin did not." Lenin's society was a battle order, while Kautsky believed that the revolution would culminate in a regime of community, reason, and justice. Of course, if one is not a socialist of any kind this is just another item in the Kautskian mythology [Note his dithyramb on "The Day after the Revolution."]. Such a mythology would hold that one can have liberty without private property. Professor Niemeyer is not entirely clear on such a profound issue for our time, since he did not drive his analysis of social policy into our own day.

The study of the ideological activists has led the author into a definition of totalitarianism: it is the political practice which stems from a total critique of society. Here he uses Camus' ideas in *L'homme révolté*. Ideological activism adopts the organization of war and not of order, a regime

which in either the French revolution or communism has been based on force unlimited by law. Such activism is committed to a protracted struggle for the fulfillment of man's ideological destiny. But if one turns from the ideological or Gnostic position what do we have? We do indeed turn from Camus' "metaphysical revolution" to what might be called a limited activism, which would restore the sense of reality on which all sound political order rests. Niemeyer then selects three issues for the remainder of the volume:

1. What is the relation of the past to a political order?

2. What is the ethics of existence that one may accept in a tradition of civility?

3. And how does one distinguish a critique within proper limits from the limitless and totally destructive critiques treated in the beginning of the volume?

First, the revolutionaries would destroy the past, while in the public past of the Jews society was built on a concrete, not to be repeated, symbolism of escape from bondage. In this last section the author relies to a large extent on the analysis used by Eric Voegelin in his *Order and History*, in which the creation of a people moves from myth and event to philosophy.

This analysis [Niemeyer's] has concentrated on the case of Israel's "leap" from a cosmological order to history as political existence, a "leap" that has its counterpart in the movement of the Greeks from the Homeric myths to order in philosophy.

Turning to the second problem, the ethics of existence, Niemeyer finds it in Voegelin's insistence on Aristotle's recognition of existential virtues.

We distinguish practical virtues from intellectual virtues, but not until recently did anyone [*i.e.*, Voegelin] recall to our attention the fact that Aristotle also reflected about existential virtues.

Friendship especially is one of the virtues of existence. And it is the *spoudaios*, the

mature, the serious man, who will best exemplify it.

In the development of the third point, the distinction of proper limits from the limitless and destructive, the author observes that fear becomes the general climate of co-existence when legitimacy in the political order is lacking. The Gnostic, ideological total critique cannot establish such legitimacy, for legitimacy itself moves within the limits of possibility. A total critique that is underpinned by the existential virtues can guarantee political rationality. Now Niemeyer uses at the conclusion of his volume three examples of authoritative total critique, Jewish prophecy, Socrates, and St. Augustine, whose wholesale attacks on their societies led not to "logical murder" but to "leaps in being." The Jewish order pictured itself in an abiding tension with the divine will. In Socrates it was necessary to reject the Homeric myth and aim at a true order founded in Greek self-revelation in philosophy. St. Augustine offers a radical critique of society in which it appears that the alienation of Manichean nihilism exceeds by far that of "Gorgias the Sophist against whom Socrates struggled but who could after all never hope to appeal to more than a few blasé intellectuals."

In the area of research and writing involved in the present study there are certain to be differences of opinion in the interpretation of intellectual history. The author leaves us to project to our own day the philo-ontic total critiques of the prophets, philosophers, and theological philosophers of history. We are left to draw our own conclusions about the miseries of the twentieth century in war and seldom in peace. No doubt any intellectual who appreciates the work Professor Niemeyer has given us will have in him something of the religious lawyer, the dialectical philosopher, and the inquirer into historical eschatology. For the conservative intellectual, this work is evocative of an approach to the valid orders of being. We are, indeed, indebted to the author for his prolonged labors with the total critique of society, both

revolutionary and limited. But as we face the issue of communism and the survival of what we believe to be the free nations of the world, we will in the interpretation of the public history of each nation find ourselves in controversy about the meaning of the past, whether it is religious, philosophical, or eschatological.

Reviewed by FRANCIS G. WILSON

The Shattered Walls

The Assault on Privacy, by Arthur R. Miller, *Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1971. xiv + 333 pp.*
\$7.95.

THIS is in many ways an extraordinary book. It is packed with a wide range of factual data and with extrapolations and projections from them. Some of these are free-standing but most are tied to historical or theoretical principles relating to the individual's right of privacy. There is something of importance in the book for almost everyone, whatever his persuasion—for the collectivist as well as the individualist, for the believer in state socialism and for the supporter of free enterprise, for the champion of law and order and for the apostle of anarchy, for the liberal and for the conservative. Professor Miller is one of those who believe that personal freedom and the right to a degree of personal privacy are inseparable, but only in a few passages does he obtrude his convictions. His main concern has been to produce an objective and comprehensive survey of this immensely important but ill-defined, unsettled and little understood area of law and ethics.

Arthur Miller is a professor in the Law School of the University of Michigan. He described himself some years ago as one