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Book Review of Furious Fancies: American Political Thought in the Post-Liberal Era, by Philip Abbott

Edward A. Purcell Jr.

New York Law School, edward.purcell@nyls.edu

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dence on his American connection, and his final political paralysis that produced only futile brutality in response to the suddenly mobilized Iranian people. The author then describes the first eighteen months of the Islamic Republic through the establishment of new national institutions, seizure of the American Embassy, and the death of the shah.

Rubin's explanations of the most important episodes in the bilateral relationship are judicious. For example, while acknowledging the Central Intelligence Agency's involvement in the shah's return to power in 1953, the author emphasizes that the American role was "minimal," a slight push that loosed an avalanche of popular support for the shah. Later, as Rubin points out, American policy makers locked themselves into blind fulfillment of His Majesty's wildest dreams about weapons. Then the Jimmy Carter administration, locked into past policies, slow to perceive the regime's collapse, and unwilling to insert military power, failed either to help the shah hold on or to establish meaningful contact with the new regime.

Yet the work falls short as history on three counts. First, despite Rubin's claim to use "archival material—much of it only recently declassified"—his research for the 1970s, fully two-thirds of the book, rests not on archival work but on items from periodicals and unattributed interviews with shadowy, unnamed officials. Second, Rubin failed to convey the richness of Iranian civilization through which Iranians define themselves and against which one must understand the histories of the shah and the Ayatollah Khomeini. Rubin's depiction of Shia Islam ignores its most central tenet, of the Imam who carries forward the Prophet's work and during whose occultation all temporal rule is illegitimate. Without such understanding any depiction of Iran's revolution rests on sand.

Finally there is the matter of time in history. Whereas historians use time to delimit their work, to draw boundaries, Rubin finished his book in the midst of unfinished events, most centrally the continued captivity of the American hostages. Even as he pushed toward publication, delicate negotiations had begun that would complete the story Rubin could not wait to tell.

In sum, this is a surface account of American-Iranian relations through the summer of 1980. Its excellent chronology will help readers unfamiliar with the sequence of events, but, to borrow Rubin's phrase, "it will take a more detached generation to examine the evidence" and write the history.

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

RICHARD PFAU

Furious Fancies: American Political Thought in the Post-Liberal Era. By Philip Abbott. (Westport: Greenwood, 1980. x + 265 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$23.95.)

The virtue of Philip Abbott's book is that it focuses on a major and increasingly critical problem, the validity and prospects of American "liberalism." The major part of the book comprises essays on a number of contemporary political theorists, while introductory and concluding chapters sketch a general analytical framework and suggest tentative conclusions. The author discusses the work of John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Robert Dahl, Daniel Bell, Herbert Marcuse, Wilson Carey McWilliams, and several others, arguing that each represents both a reaction against, as well as a variation of, the "core" beliefs of

liberalism. The author defines those beliefs as "the acceptance of perpetual human conflict and the belief in the existence and plurality of forms of the good life." His "post-liberals" agree that liberalism is an inadequate and destructive philosophy; they search for various types of emotive and communal bonds among individuals; and they share a somewhat tenuously held faith in the possibility of some salubrious social transformation. In the end, each still retains recognizably "liberal" qualities. Their theorizing, the author concludes, is basically unsatisfactory, though their work is significant as a symptom of contemporary confusion and uncertainty in political philosophy.

The book has three major shortcomings. First, while the author's main interest lies in the logical analysis of theory, he frequently writes as though he were engaged in historical interpretation. The result is a blurred focus that gives rise to questionable generalizations and abortive suggestions. While his comments on individual writers are often lucid and perceptive, his broader and implicitly historical arguments fail to carry conviction.

Second, the book fails to adequately explain the emergence and significance of "post-liberalism." Why these writers and not others? When and why does "post-liberalism" develop? From what, beyond the "liberal tradition," does it take its intellectual inspiration?

Third, "liberalism" and its variations emerge as almost infinitely protean. Part of the problem springs from the book's subjective method, described by the author as "an attempt to determine the nature of a belief system by grasping its inner reality." Part of the problem, too, stems from the effort to integrate by mere adumbration the major political theorists from Thomas Hobbes to the "post-liberals" into a coherent tradition. Finally, the problem is also partly rooted in the inadequately specific definitional terms the book employs. Discussing "liberalism" in terms of its two components, "scientific" (acceptance of conflict) and "utopian" (desire for freedom and liberation), the author is easily able to compare "liberal" thinkers. The similarities and differences identified, however, are frequently too abstract and amorphous; hence, their significance remains dubious.

In spite of cavils, however, the book is a useful introduction to contemporary political thought. It will undoubtedly help spur the general effort of Americans to reconsider the validity of many received ideas in the drastically changing circumstances of the late twentieth century.

NEW YORK CITY

EDWARD A. PURCELL, JR.

Into the Dark: Hannah Arendt and Totalitarianism. By Stephen J. Whitfield. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980. xii + 338 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$18.95.)

The late Hannah Arendt was a highly distinctive presence in American intellectual life during the three decades following World War II. Although her contributions as a political philosopher were diverse, her fame and influence derived especially from two works: *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963). Both became crucial tools in the effort made by American intellectuals to comprehend the political order supervised by Adolf Hitler and the political order supervised by Joseph Stalin. The extent to which the Third Reich and Stalin's Soviet Union could be fairly described as varia-