Almost inevitably these stories are alarmist and grimly warn the public of the damage these negative ads inflict on democracy. It is here, at the end of chapter 6, and throughout the concluding chapter that Geer examines the larger implications of his findings. According to Geer, negativity in presidential campaigns is rising because of increasing polarization in American politics. When candidates and parties are further apart on issues—as they are now—there are more incentives to attack the other side. But as Geer reiterates throughout the book, this is a good thing. It better equips Americans to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens. But rather than embracing this negativity, we curse and bemoan its existence, largely because the media (and many prominent politicians) tell us it is bad. Geer believes that this must change.

This book will be somewhat controversial, as Geer recognizes. It goes squarely against the conventional wisdom. And there are some flaws in the book. In some instances (particularly in chapters 4 and 5), readers may find the empirical evidence offered to back certain claims less than fully convincing. Examining only ads paid for directly by the candidate or the party excludes some of the most notorious ads of recent years, for example, the Willie Horton ads in 1988 and the Swift Boat ads in 2004. Geer discounts the importance of this issue, but I am not so sure. He also acknowledges that he could not come up with a valid way to measure visuals in televised ads, and that his analysis does not get at implicit appeals. Both of these problems represent important avenues for future research. Overall, however, this is a very good book. A meaningful, informed conversation on the role of negativity in campaigns has begun. Finally.

–Mark D. Brewer

EXISTENTIALIST CONSERVATISM

Peter Augustine Lawler: *Stuck with Virtue: The American Individual and Our Biotechnological Future* (Wilmington, DL: ISI Books, 2005. Pp. ix, 262. $25.00.)

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Peter Lawler believes that American political culture suffers from a narrow view of human nature. Rejecting the Lockean individualism that he sees running throughout American life, he worries that Americans think of themselves mostly as free individuals, and thus they ignore their full human nature as "parents, children, friends, citizens, or creatures" (p. xi). The Darwinian sociobiologists rightly challenge America's Lockean individualism by teaching that human beings are social animals by nature. Even this, Lawler insists, is not the full truth about human nature. While the Lockeans tell us that we are only autonomous individuals, the Darwinians tell us that we

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are only clever chimps. Even if there is some partial truth in each position, Lawler observes, neither side comprehends the deep insight into human nature that comes from our existential feeling of being anxious aliens in the universe, homeless beings searching for our true home beyond the natural universe. So Lawler proposes an existentialist conservatism that would promote both the social virtues of love and duty that secure incomplete happiness in this world and the supernatural virtues of faith and hope that secure complete happiness in the next world.

Although Lawler sees Lockean individualism in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, he believes that the American founders knew that human beings were not just autonomous individuals but social animals as well. They expected that while Americans would live their public lives as liberated individuals, they would live their private lives as parents, children, friends, and creatures. Americans would thus have to live "double lives" (p. 33). The problem with this arrangement, Lawler argues, is that there is a cultural tendency—supported by the U.S. Supreme Court—to extend Lockean individualism to all areas of life.

To solve this problem, Lawler recommends "putting Locke in the Locke box" (p. 217). We need to confine the Lockean individualism to a restricted realm of constitutional law. Beyond Lockean constitutionalism, American culture should be governed by a rich understanding of human nature rooted in common-sense natural law, religious faith, and existential anxiety.

Natural-law thinking is confirmed to some extent by sociobiology. "We remain in some measure at home in the world as natural animals, and our enjoyments as parents, children, friends, and community members have a natural foundation in social instinct" (p. 169). But Darwinian science is only a partial truth because it denies the supernatural character of the human soul with its transcendent longings.

American religion recognizes those transcendent longings. But even without religious faith, Lawler claims, all human beings have a natural experience of being self-conscious beings that fear death and yearn for immortality. He identifies himself as belonging to a tradition of existentialist thinkers—from St. Augustine and Blaise Pascal to Martin Heidegger and Walker Percy—who have probed that experience of alienation and homelessness that comes to mortal beings who do not want to die.

As an alternative to his existentialist position, Lawler attributes to Leo Strauss the thought that "through reason, some human beings can live in unalienated serenity without God in search of the truth, endlessly unraveling the riddle of Being" (p. 214). But Lawler doubts that such Socratic philosophizing can remove the feeling of alienation, because he cannot see how the philosopher could ever explain his own restless quest for truth as coming from the same impersonal natural causes that he uses to explain everything else in the universe.

Biotechnology promises to satisfy the existential longings of human beings by giving them the power to remake their nature as they wish. Some people

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worry that this will lead to the "abolition of man" in a "posthuman future." Lawler dismisses this as unlikely, because he doubts that biotechnology could ever abolish the anxious longings of the human soul.

Lawler's arguments for these claims leave us with many questions. What is his primary ground for rejecting Lockean individualism? Is it religious faith? Or natural law? Or the experience of existential alienation? Or is it some combination of these?

If Lawler is relying on religious faith, what kind of religion does he have in mind? He refers to "our religion," "American religion," or "orthodox religion" without specifying what he means (pp. xvi, 97, 108). Sometimes, he specifically appeals to Christian existentialism. He identifies American evangelical Christians as the most vigorous opponents of Lockean individualism. But he scorns the evangelicals for "their intellectual weakness, their tendency not to read or write great books," and he observes that "their Christian America is founded in the revelation of the Bible, not that realistic view of nature and human nature that all citizens can share in common" (p. 105).

Can this "realistic view of nature and human nature" find support in Darwinian sociobiology? Can Darwinian science sustain natural-law thinking about the instinctive, natural roots for family life and social bonding? If Darwinism is only a "partial truth," what has to be added to make it a fuller truth? Lawler rejects "fundamentalist creationism" as "pretty implausible" (p. 174). But while he agrees that "human beings may have become human through an evolutionary process," he also insists that "at some point in that process there must have been an 'ontological leap' that made us more than simply clever animals by nature," and this leap has something to do with the capacity for language (p. 173). (Here he seems to be following Pope John Paul II's statement on evolution in 1996.) How exactly did this "ontological leap" occur? Could it have arisen from the emergence of the soul in the evolution of the primate brain to support complex language and conceptual abstraction? If so, would this mean that it is not silly to see ourselves in some manner as "clever chimps"?

A crucial part of Lawler's "realistic view of nature and human nature" is the claim "that human beings are alienated by their natures" and that this claim "does not necessarily depend on religious faith" (p. 5). Does this mean then that religious faith is not required for his existentialist argument against Lockean individualism? If so, is it really true that the feeling of alienation in the universe is inherent in human nature? Did St. Augustine discover human alienation as a universal truth about human nature that previous thinkers had never seen?

Does existential alienation depend on some sense of individuality? Lawler describes "the individual who clings to existence" and "the individual's fear or anxiety in the face of his own death" (p. 183). What really bothers human beings is that "nature is hostile to their particular existences" (p. 185). Against Darwinian evolution, he objects: "What is good about being the plaything of such a process, one that is so coldly indifferent to me?" (p. 184). Does Lawler's

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existential conservatism place "me" at the center of the universe? How does this differ from Lockean individualism?

Does Lawler agree with Friedrich Hayek, who defended "true individualism" as opposed to "false individualism"? In fact, Lawler claims to write "largely in the tradition of Hayek, Acton, and Tocqueville, against big government and for the enduring responsibility of fallible mortals" (p. 3). Hayek's "true individualism" affirmed the value of family life and all of those intermediate associations between the state and the individual that sustain the moral order of civil society. Is this what Lawler means by "putting Locke in the Locke box"—combining a Lockean state that treats all citizens as autonomous individuals and a civil society in which people live as parents, children, friends, and creatures? Or would Lawler reject this as an untenable arrangement based on "double lives"?

–Larry Arnhart

CATHOLIC ACTIVISM AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Matthew A. Redinger: *American Catholics and the Mexican Revolution, 1924–1936* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005. Pp. xii, 260. $45.00; $22.00, paper.)

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Over the past decade, Mexican and U.S. American bishops have forthrightly called attention to the spiritual and public policy challenges posed by immigration in "Welcoming the Stranger" (2000) and "Strangers No Longer" (2003). Within the context of "border crossings" between Mexico and the United States, Matthew Redinger's case study of how U.S. Catholic institutions and actors played a notable role in creating both Mexican domestic policy and U.S. foreign policy regarding the persecution of Catholics by Mexican governments between 1924 and 1936 is very timely.

The beginning of Redinger's narrative focuses on how the Mexican Revolution amplified the liberal/conservative political division of the nineteenth century with conservatives supporting the Catholic Church and liberals promoting a secularist politics that saw the Church as reactionary. In 1915, Eliseo Arredondo, a representative of the Carranza government in Washington, DC, assured the Wilson administration that Carranza would guarantee religious freedom in Mexico. However, provisions of the subsequent 1917 constitution advanced secularist and anticlerical aims. Although the Carranza government did not implement these provisions, the Calles government enforced these anti-Catholic provisions upon coming into power in late 1924. In response, the Cristo Rey movement and the Mexican hierarchy mounted opposition to Calles.

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