Theodore Roosevelt, The Gospel of Strenuosity, and Duties at Home and Abroad

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America as *crusader* or *exemplar* in international politics? No doubt that Theodore Roosevelt would find the proposition both interesting and somewhat misleading for presidential leadership in the conduct of the nation□□ diplomacy. He would not be unfamiliar with the thematic distinction, having contrasted the supposed perils and weakness of the Jefferson-Madison international legacy with the vigor and realism of the Federalists in the tradition of George Washington and John Quincy Adams. Yet Roosevelt was never prepared to vouchsafe historical parallels for his own conduct as Chief Executive. His broadsides against the idealism of Jefferson and Madison did not displace his support, during and after his presidency, for arbitration and a world court with enforcement power. Similarly, his reputation as an architect of American *Realpolitik* has to make room for the idea that the muscular defense of national interest was not separate from his own understanding of the civilizing obligations of great powers (obligations that he often defended with Kantian zeal). Roosevelt certainly had a reputation as a vociferous crusader on progressive issues at home and in his battle against the malefactors and monopolists of great wealth. But that duty did not detract from his defense of individual liberty and freedom against the tyranny of elites, whether in the guise of labor unions or corporate bosses. His reformism was often vilified by those within his own political party as much as by his opponents in the Democratic Party. Party labels and political traditions did little to confine the single-mindedness of this politician□on□horseback.

His celebration of the strenuous life, or the politician□□ turbulent life in the arena, was touted in the midst of war and America□□ great crusade against Spain in 1898. Roosevelt, in some ways, sounded little different from Metternich in arguing that preparation for war was the best insurance for peace. At the same time, however, Roosevelt did not see his gospel of strenuosity as an expedient license for imperial conquest much less as a literary device to embroider mundane power politics with the finery of robust American exceptionalism. In Roosevelt□□ mind, strenuosity had relevance to both the mind and the body. Duties in the family, as well as duties in the home, were not completely removed from the duties of nations in a very fragile society of states. Roosevelt, objecting to the continental tradition of *raison détat* from the time of Machiavelli through the rule of Louis XVI and Frederick the Great, was slow to

accept a complete divorce between private morals and the ethical duties of statesmen. Roosevelt often sounded like the political realist in acknowledging that the anarchic features of the international system could not help but accelerate fears about insecurity and incentives for self-help among nations. Yet the persistence of war and conflict in world politics eliminated neither moral choices nor morality itself for men and women whether they be citizens, soldiers, or diplomats. What changes is not the centrality of ethics in the affairs of human beings but the international political environment within which moral commands would be more or less observed by individuals within sovereign states. Roosevelt□□ strenuous life, despite his intemperate outbursts against pacifists and □milk and water□ moralists, was all about tailoring moral and prudential judgments to a milieu, whether domestic or international, in which the realities of power might be leavened by politicians or statesmen who understand that interests insulated from larger purposes are sterile and self-defeating.

This paper explores Roosevelt□□ intellectual universe in tandem with his defense of the strenuous life as a standard for citizens and nations. Preliminary sections of the paper attempt to provide some intellectual and historical context by examining Roosevelt□□ understanding of American political culture, applied ethics in politics, and the challenges of democratic government. Roosevelt does not solve the problem of whether America is an exemplar or crusader in foreign policy and whether either option conveys the normative core of American□□ *mission* in the world. He offered no theory of international politics and always approached academic debates on his own terms. Roosevelt was a transitional figure who served and lived at a time when Kipling□□ age of imperial hubris (an age whose Anglo-Saxon triumphs he had celebrated) was beginning to give way to a resurgence of interest in how international law, and new forms of international organization, could attenuate the rivalries of states. What his legacy can tell us is that the well-worn dichotomy between □realists□ and □idealists,□ in politics and diplomacy, is far too narrow to explain this mix of values and interests that often justified both the imperial projection of American power (and commerce) as well as the appeal (over time) to arbitration and international law to tame the rivalries of nations.

History, Culture, Nationhood

Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Adams once observed, exhibited that rare and primitive endowment that belongs to ultimate matter□□the quality that medieval theology assigned to God□he was pure act.□[i] [i] Adams regarded power as the worst sort of poison for energetic politicians who seek education in the paths of duty and virtue. Especially among American presidents, he thought, this corruption unfolds in two ways. First, there is □an almost insane excitement□ that comes with wielding unmeasured power with immeasurable energy. Second, there is unavoidable intellectual disorder since □no mind is so well balanced as to bear the strain

of seizing unlimited force without habit or knowledge of it.□[ii] [ii] Roosevelts, Adams figured, are born and can never be taught. Lineage notwithstanding, and even admitting that Roosevelt displayed □a singularly direct nature and honest intent,□ the tragedy of the statesman as depicted by Adams□i.e., the effect of unlimited power on limited mind□is mirrored throughout society. The power of self-control is hardly sustainable amid wolves and hounds whose lives depend on seizing the carrion. Neither a moral man nor a moral society could endure in a modern period where politics is a struggle not of men but of material forces beyond control. Interestingly enough, Adams located □the motors that drive...men□ in the impersonal forces of *international relations*. Foreign policy and diplomacy are □the only sure standards of movement□ for any theory of history or politics.[iii] [iii]

Adams□ assessment of Roosevelt provides a useful starting point for the purposes of this paper. As a summary characterization of Roosevelt□□ political personality, not to mention his myriad intellectual convictions, it is a revealing half-truth at best. Even if Roosevelt lived □naturally in restless agitation,□ and even if Roosevelt worried his own friends both by the ambitions of his power and the power of his ambitions, the twenty-sixth president of the United States was something more than purely act though certainly something less than purely thought. Roosevelt believed that the life and dilemmas of the statesman mirrored enduring philosophical inquiry into the competing vitalities of human nature, the material, and moral forces of history, and the clash of national and cultural traditions in search of world order. Roosevelt did not approach these topics as a social scientist would a range of independent variables or as a philosopher would the systematic quest for truth and immortality. A life spent in tension between the inevitability of conflict and the imperative of peace, between political self-assertion and ethical self-denial, between the relativity of national traditions and cosmopolitan symbols of Western civilization□these were the parameters within which Roosevelt thought a good bit about what he termed □practical idealism□ in a world that was not soon to see an end to power politics.

In his study on the origin and form of Greek tragedy, Gerald Else shares the following profile of Solon:

> He was not only the greatest statesman of archaic Athens, he was her greatest and only literary man. A certain amount of ink has been spilled...over the questions, whether Solon was a great poet. Whether he was or not, he was a born writer, a man who felt an insistent need to communicate his thoughts and feelings to more men than happened to be within range of his voice at the moment, and beyond the immediate issues of the moment. Moreover, although he treasured the □good things□ of life all his days□love, friendship, wine, horses, and dogs□most of his writing centered on public questions. Nowadays much of it would be called□ugly

word!□□journalistic.□ In any case its predominant aim was persuasion and, in a higher sense, instruction.[iv] [iv]

Similarly, Roosevelt was always in search of the same unity and freedom for his people; in addition, he believed there to be a moral and spiritual unity at the center of American civilization. The simple virtues that Roosevelt taught were the same □Courage, tenacity, faithfulness, courtesy and consideration, above all dedication of one□□ whole being, up to and including life itself, to an overriding ideal of nobility□[v] [v] that Solon looked to in the Greek people. Commenting on the Old Testament flavor of Roosevelt□□ many essays on American ideals, William Allen White observed that readers would discover □no fine-spun theology□ or impenetrable □controversy about philosophies of life.□[vi] [vi] Roosevelt offered no schemes of redemption or plans of atonement that come simply through free grace and undying love.

What □saith the preacher□ Roosevelt, often through homilies with an Old Testament zeal, is not unlike what Isaiah might have propounded in the days of the Kings. Addressing himself to men in the masses, Roosevelt hammers again and again the same theme: □Be good, be good, be good; live for righteousness, fight for righteousness, and if need be die for it.□[vii] [vii] One may agree with White□□ judgment that Roosevelt□□ speeches and essays are neither rhetorically interesting nor beautiful and eloquent in their language. Yet, for all of their obvious points in ethics and philosophy, and despite the fact that they may be easy to parody, they are not easy to ignore or forget. In a long career□as a member of the New York Assembly, as police commissioner, as candidate for mayor of the New York Assembly, as police commissioner, as candidate for mayor of New York, as national civil service commissioner, as assistant secretary of the Navy, as soldier, as governor of New York, and as president of the United States□Roosevelt□□ common moralities challenged the will of the people. On one occasion, Secretary of State Elihu Root addressed the president as follows: □What I admire most about you, Theodore, is your discovery of the Ten Commandments!□[viii] [viii] When Roosevelt□□ preachments were transformed into applied ethics in American business and political life, however, they represented a new and dangerous creed. When applied to diplomacy and war, they were as often directed inward as outward. After Woodrow Wilson was elected in 1916, and many celebrated that he □kept us out of the war,□ Roosevelt fumed: The people □had no ethical feeling . . .; they weren□t concerned with honor or justice or self-respect; they were concerned for the safety of their own carcasses.□[ix] [ix]

American artistic and literary achievement, if it was to deserve the stamp of originality, had to embody both national and cosmopolitan impulses. Admittedly, self-conscious straining after a nationalistic form of expression may defeat itself, since □self-consciousness is almost always a drawback.□ For Roosevelt, the mere designation of art as □national□ was no guarantee that artistic or literary training would lead to sympathetic presentation of the symbols

of national experience. Yet such sympathy, he believed, was far from negligible, inasmuch as thinkers and writers express the soul of a nation. Only by reflecting the innermost purposes of the nation□assumptions about the substantive, transcendent, and objective order of society□can the creative spirit of the individual become one with humanity at large. The man who □can do most for the nations of the world□ is one □whose being. . . [is] most closely intertwined with those of the people to which he himself belongs.□ National self-expression so conceived does not invalidate literary and artistic productions which are vital to all nations. Roosevelt cited as examples Bade□□ □The Old Testament in the Light of Today,□ Owen Wister□□ □Pentecost of Calamity,□ and Gustavus Oehlinger□□ □Their True Faith and Allegiance.□[x] [x]

Moreover, Roosevelt saw an important political connection between art and national life. The world power whose prestige is divorced from the various forms of artistic production□whether in literature, sculpture, or architecture□achieves □but a malformed greatness . . . as witness Tyre, Sidon, and Carthage.□[xi] [xi] America, Roosevelt believed, had to exist as something more that the custodian of its own physical patrimony. Likewise, the □commercial materialism of the Phoenician commonwealths□ could offer instruction in the means, but not the ends, of national greatness. Even less in the way of cultural achievement was to be expected if Americans were just one more race of conquerors, administrators, and empire builders.

Roosevelt□□ reputation as a nature-lover was matched by his preoccupation with the lessons of human nature in politics and literature. With an affinity for the tragic dramas of Shakespeare, he preferred the martial Macbeth to the lonely and introspective Hamlet. An essay by Roosevelt, entitled □Dante and the Bowery,□ reflected a mindset that found lofty poetry quite compatible with the everyday struggles and ordinary human failings of urban Americans. He lamented that Walt Whitman was virtually the only nineteenth century American poet who dared to use the Bowery□i.e., □anything that was striking and vividly typical of the humanity around him□□as Dante used the mere mortals of his day. Dante dealt with those qualities of the human soul which towered over outward and superficial differences of intellect or skill. More importantly, □he was also . . . a realist,□ insofar as his imagination unlocked the passions of men inside □the far depths of our being.□[xii] [xii] Roosevelt, though born into aristocracy, was troubled that his own age had lost the faculty to recognize the essential traits of humanity in big and little men alike.

Walter Bagehot once hypothesized that the reason so few memorable works of history stand out among the multitude that regularly pour forth from publishers is that the men who have seen things and done things cannot write, whereas the men who can write have not done or seen anything.[xiii] [xiii] What most biographers and literary critics concede is Roosevelt□□ best work of history□his multivolume The Winning of the West□reveals an author who was both a trained

scientific investigator and accomplished story-teller. To a great extent, Roosevelt□□ intellectual debt was to the □romantic□ historians in the tradition of Francis Parkman and William Prescott. The romantic school of history in the middle and later nineteenth century may have been simple in outlook and untutored in method, but their books speak eloquently of broader and more cosmopolitan horizons than those explored by their academic successors.[xiv] [xiv] Although Roosevelt would seldom lavish praise upon the new □professional□ historians, and while he defended history as a valid literary form, his own recreation of the past reveals a larger, philosophical understanding of the forces shaping the character of men and nations. Something more than scientific curiosity led Roosevelt, in his presidential address before the American Historical Association, to speak of bringing □the past before our eyes as if it were the present.□ Upon what intellectual basis, on might ask, is the scientific historian able to:

> . . . see the glory of triumphant violence and the revel of those who do wrong in high places, and the broken-hearted despair that lies beneath the glory and the revel. . . . [or] see the supreme righteousness of the wars for freedom and justice, and know that the men who fell in those wars made all mankind their debtors?[xv] [xv]

A certain □imaginative power□ is demanded for the great historian no less than for the great poet. No quantity of photographs, Roosevelt suggested, could ever be the equivalent of one Rembrandt. By imaginative skill, he did not mean recreating facts, events, and personalities according to subjective or ideological preferences. Rather he had ain mind □the fit of vision, the quality of the seer, the power himself to see what has happened and to make what he has seen clear to the vision of others.□[xvi] [xvi] Such a person, Roosevelt believed, is like Thucydides who hoped that his words would be □judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will. . .be repeated in the future.□[xvii] [xvii]

Roosevelt□□ language speaks to the philosophical or theoretical foundations of historical inquiry. Political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau resorted to the same analogy from photography to help underwrite the principles of realist political thought. □The difference between . . . politics as it actually is and a rational theory derived from it is like the difference between a photograph and a painted portrait.□[xviii] [xviii] Although the photograph shows everything that can be seen by the naked eye, the painted portrait does not. Yet the latter shows something that cannot be apprehended by the naked eye□the human essence of the portrait portrayed. Similarly, Roosevelt believed that the historical imagination is an ability □to grasp what is essential . . . , the power to embody ghosts, to put flesh and blood on dry bones, to make dead men living before our eyes.□[xix] [xix]

In addition, political realists like Morgenthau and Roosevelt embrace a normative inclination to make the photographic picture of the world resemble, as much as possible, its painted portrait. This desire compels one to recognize the tension between the moral and practical purposes of political man. Only then can the historian hope to find some fit between the contingencies and systematic irrationalities of man□□ political existence, on the one hand, and the rational and moral factors which incline men to justice and happiness, on the other hand.

Roosevelt argued that the great historian was also a great moralist.[xx] [xx] This conclusion followed from the historian□□ reliance upon theoretical, or interpretive, constructs about the ethical aspects of social and political life which experience can never completely master. Roosevelt□□ writings, if not his grandiose political rhetoric, often display a sense of modesty about how the highest human aspirations linger unfulfilled before unpredictable fate. He sought to accommodate both the □hard materialism□ of his age and □strange capacity for lofty idealism which must be reckoned with□ in the national character of Americans. That this capacity would be considered unusual, especially since Roosevelt himself contributed his fair share to such loftiness, might be attributed to Roosevelt□□ distrust of all morality unaccompanied by efforts □made with measurable success to translate the words into deeds.□[xxi] [xxi] It is of no small consequence that this American leader could proclaim his country□□ exceptionalism in language that would match the zeal of Jefferson and Wilson: □I believe . . . that the forces working for good in our national life outweigh the forces working for evil, and . . . . with much halting and turning aside from the path, we shall yet. . .prove our faith by our works, and show in our lives our belief that righteousness exalteth a nation.□[xxii] [xxii] In the final analysis, the most important factor in national greatness is national character. Roosevelt would remind us, however, that qualities of national character have a direct bearing on the way in which concepts of duty and moral obligation produce self-knowledge and self-mastery.

Applied Ethics and Practical Idealism

A nation□□ leaders are judged □both as regards their conception of their duties toward their country and their conception of the duty of that country, embodied in its government, toward its own people and toward foreign nations.□[xxiii] [xxiii] Clearly, Roosevelt took exception with the Machiavellian doctrine of *raison d□état* in politics. From Machiavelli to Bismarck, *raison d□état* has been characterized by the tendency to differentiate sharply between the moral inclinations of the solitary individual and the immoral nature of political society within and above the state. Roosevelt was unprepared to so easily separate the political and private sphere for purposes of ethical evaluation. At a minimum, Roosevelt did not consider the private life of a public man to be a category of behavior separate from the general welfare of the nation. In a

lecture on applied ethics delivered at Harvard University in 1920, Roosevelt punctuated his conviction:

> You are not going to do much service in public life unless you first fit yourselves for doing it by the way in which you do your duties in your private lives. The cases are rare indeed when the man is a useful citizen in his relation to the State at the same time that he is not a useful citizen in his relations to his family and his neighbors. Normally, the man cannot be a good citizen in the sense of performing his duty to the commonwealth as a whole unless he is the type of man who performs the first and most essential of all duties□those in connections with his own family, his own friends and neighbors and associates.[xxiv] [xxiv]

Admittedly, conscientious private conduct□i.e., □domestic morality, punctuality in payment of debts, being a good husband and father, being a good neighbor□□is not a sufficient reason for reposing ultimate confidence in a public official. However, the absence of these qualities tends to establish a presumption against any public servant. Few other American presidents took more seriously the issue of character as an obligation that the governors have to the governed. The issue simply could not be left to wise legislation or enlightened opinions of the judiciary. A key attribute of public leadership is the ability □to exert an influence upon the community at large, especially upon the young men of the community.□ [xxv] [xxv] Implicit also in Roosevelt□□ contention is the idea that political service cannot easily function as a substitute for the many other facets of private behavior that bring forth lessons of moral virtue.

John Morton Blum raises here an important issue in the personality and political theory of Roosevelt that biographers and historians might well ponder. Blum analyzes Roosevelt□□ philosophy of power as politician and president.[xxvi] [xxvi] In particular, he asserts that Roosevelt was unconcerned with happiness (at least in the liberal tradition) and captivated at every turn by hard work, duty, power, and order. Roosevelt, he says, valued the latter □not as prerequisites for some ultimate happiness but as ends in themselves.□ Duty and sacrifice □produce frightening obstacles to personal happiness.□[xxvii] [xxvii] Whether Roosevelt was happy or unhappy in a personal sense, at some particular point in time, calls for a diagnosis that surpasses the psychic skills of most analysts. Even up to the sickness and physical inhibitions of his last years, he hardly left the impression of a tormented, broken creature bereft of all enthusiasm for himself, his family, and country. In fact, he was only *too happy* to lampoon Wilson□□ each and every foreign policy mistake on the road to a great war that would end all wars.

More troubling perhaps is Blum□□ assertion that none of □Roosevelt□□ politics . . . pertained . . . at all to happiness.□[xxviii] [xxviii] Blum found none of the influence of Bentham or Mill in Roosevelt□□ letters or public statements. To simply leave the matter hanging by such a thin reed□□but manifestly he believed in power and order□□is objectionable in view of Roosevelt□□ ethical perspective on the public and private duties of citizens in a democracy. Perhaps there was more classical, than liberal, inspiration to Roosevelt□□ pursuit of happiness; after all, he was more inclined to speak about the actualization of potential inherent in man□□ nature than the greatest good for the greatest number (or, for that matter, to trust in the benign workings of public opinion as a rational affirmation of what happiness must surely be). Political philosophers, for example, might shift the discussion to ascertain whether Roosevelt sided with a view of politics defined by happiness or a view of politics defined by justice. Power and order, at least on the basis of the classical understanding, would not be entirely alien to the quest for justice. Whether one wants to associate Roosevelt□□ view of government with justice, happiness, or order, there is one unmistakable conclusion. Government and politics entail a process of education whereby civic, moral, and intellectual virtues form character, mind, and spirit to perfect the properly human in each person.[xxix] [xxix]

Roosevelt contrasted the military mind with the imperatives of statesmanship in order to clarify the relationship of ethics to politics. The first duty of the general, he advised, is to win military campaigns.[xxx] [xxx] The military mind operates between the absolutes of victory and defeat. The methods of the soldier are simple and conditional: to bring the greatest amount of violence to bear upon the enemy□□ vulnerable points. By contrast, the statesman is obligated to take a larger view, □to work for the betterment of his country and for its good relations with the rest of the world.□ In addition to high ideals, he must possess the skill and force that will enable him to realize these larger purposes. More often than not, the statesman must rely on patient and subtle maneuvering to meet the other side on the middle ground of a negotiated compromise. Roosevelt was sensitive to all three components of moral reasoning□intentions, means, and consequences. Such traits as □sagacity, courage [and] all that makes for efficiency□ may actually lead to disaster unless the individual□□ □character. . .will use them for good and not for evil.□ At the same time, superior aspirations are apt to be pharisaical unless the politician is prepared □to face facts as they actually are and to work with his fellows under existing conditions, instead of confining himself to complaints about the conditions, or to railing at the men because they are not other than he finds them.□[xxxi] [xxxi]

For Roosevelt, no American statesman better typified the practical idealist than Abraham Lincoln. He reflected upon both the strong common sense and lofty standard of morality embodied in Lincoln□□ historic question as to whether any government□not too strong for the liberties of its people□ can maintain its existence in national emergencies. Lincoln remarked that all the strife inherent in the 1864 election revealed

> human nature practically applied to the facts of the case. What has occurred in this case must never occur in similar cases. Human nature will not change. . . . Let us therefore study the incidents in this as philosophy to learn wisdom from and none of them as wrongs to be avenged. . . . Now that the election is over, may not all having a common interest reunite in a common effort to save our common country? . . . While I am . . . duly grateful . . . to Almighty God for having directed my countrymen to a right conclusion, as I think for their own good, it adds nothing to my satisfaction that any other man may be disappointed or pained by the result.[xxxii] [xxxii]

Lincoln□□ mood here is a kind of panorama on political ethics: courage, conviction, humility, self-sacrifice and self-assertion□and all before a transcendent will that stands in judgment over imperfect beings. Studying great and heroic deeds of the past, Roosevelt warned, was no excuse for doing poorly in the present. One reason we might profit from attention to □the dead issues of the past□ is that the virtues and vices of Lincoln□□ day have lost none of their luster and reach with the passage of time. Another reason why these Lincolnian ethical and political dilemmas are important is that they □will enable us to avoid the twin gulfs of immorality and inefficiency□the gulfs, which always lie one on each side of the careers alike of man and of nation.□[xxxiii] [xxxiii] Roosevelt knew that it helps little to avoid one if only to be shipwrecked on the other. Moral absolutists, no less than parlor critics who condemn others but have no power themselves to do good and relatively little to do ill, are as alien to Lincoln□□ spirit as the vicious and unpatriotic themselves. Lincoln teaches that adherence to right is a feckless pursuit (□mere sound and fury□) unless accompanied by wisdom□a prudent or practical good sense that will enable one to achieve desirable results with the instruments at hand.[xxxiv] [xxxiv]

Historian William E. H. Lecky, in the fifth volume of his History of England, reinforced Roosevelt□□ tendency to differentiate between the qualities necessary for a successful political career and those which lead to high praise in the domains of pure intellect and pure moral effort. Lecky inventoried any number of moral characteristics essential □in the higher spheres of statesmanship□: passionate earnestness and self-devotion, complete concentration of every faculty on an unselfish aim, uncalculating daring, a delicacy of conscience, and a loftiness of aim.[xxxv] [xxxv] To most men and ordinary politicians, these traits are apt to hinder rather than assist in life□□ work. The politician can never escape the superficial and commonplace; □his art is in great measure that of skillful compromise.□ Yet, in the conditions of modern life, Lecky advised that the victorious statesman must possess these □secondary□ qualities to an unusual degree. Roosevelt could not help but see a reflection of his own thinking in the historian□□ preference for a statesman

> . . . who is in the closest intellectual and moral sympathy with the average of the intelligent men of his time, and who pursues common ideals with more than common ability. . . . Tact, business talent, knowledge of men, resolution, promptitude and sagacity in dealing with immediate emergencies, a character which lends itself easily to conciliation, diminishes friction and inspires confidence. . .are more likely to be found among shrewd and enlightened men of the world than among men of great original genius.[xxxvi] [xxxvi]

Politics and Democracy

From his biography of Gouverneur Morris, one can glean the main themes that shaped Roosevelt□□ view of American political history. There is the usual contempt of Jefferson and his neglect of national security, sideswipes at secondary figures such as □the filthy little atheist□ Thomas Paine, and his portrayal of the French Revolution boils with his hatred of political disorder and mob violence.[xxxvii] [xxxvii] The French revolutionists, after 1789, pushed forward into four years of □red□ that culminated in the terror and more to □damage democracy . . . [and] put back the cause of popular government . . . than any despot or oligarchy from that time to this.□[xxxviii] [xxxviii] He was troubled by men who would make a religion of democracy, □who typified liberty as a goddess, and who prattled words like these while their hearts were black with murder committed in such names.□[xxxix] [xxxix]

Genuine democracy, in Roosevelt□□ estimation, required avoiding wild extremes in wealth and poverty and □forsaking either unreasonable conservatism or unreasonable radicalism.□ He elaborated on the point in an address on popular sovereignty delivered at Carnegie Hall in 1912.

> Had pre-Revolutionary France listened to men like Turgot, and backed them up, all would have gone well. But the . . . Bourbon reactionaries . . . turned down Turgot; and then found that instead of him they had obtained Robespierre. They gained twenty years□ freedom from all restraint and reform, at the cost of a whirlwind of red terror; and in their turn the unbridled extremists of the terror induced a blind reaction; and so, with convulsion and oscillation from one extreme to another, with alternations of violent radicalism and violent Bourbonism, the French people went through misery to a shattered goal.[xl] [xl]

Later in life, he recommended to a fellow progressive that those would take a militant stand for direct democracy might profit by pondering Acton□□ Lectures on the French Revolution. The Federalists, the authors of his own political philosophy, are hailed for their nationalism and sound economic policies, but sharply criticized for their opposition to Western expansionism, their disloyalty during the War of 1812, and their aristocratic disdain of democracy.[xli] [xli]

Roosevelt, writing as a gentleman historian in 1888, attacked the powers of blind conservatism in a way that would typify his spirited criticism of Republican leaders (and the □malefactors□ of great wealth) just two decades later.

> In a government such as ours, it was a foregone conclusion that a party which did not believe in the people would sooner or later be thrown out of power. . . . This distrust was felt, and of course excited corresponding and intense hostility. Had the Federalists . . . freely trusted in the people the latter would have shown their trust was well founded; but there was no hope for leaders who . . . feared their own followers.[xlii] [xlii]

One of Roosevelt□□ goals was to emancipate nationalism from its dubious alliance with older conservative traditions; Roosevelt□□ nationalist would also be a democrat.

Roosevelt□□ patrician background did not stand in the way of his self-designation as a □genuine democrat.□ To understand Roosevelt□□ unconventional view of democracy, it is first important to grasp the kind of citizen that Roosevelt believed democracy would best serve. His democratic conventions were on display when talking, or writing, about the qualities he discovered in the honest laborer or hard-working common man. Roosevelt was only too-well-aware that others, including many within his own party, saw either hypocrisy or a looming political disaster in this attachment to the commoner. □I am very fond of books and of study, of pictures and of bronzes, just as I am fond of the woods and of watching wild birds and beasts, and I like to talk with scholars and literary men, and leaders of thought of all kinds.□ Roosevelt pushed aside all the ideological stereotypes. Those with whom he felt the most sympathy, however, were

> ...not big business men, big corporation lawyers, big contractors of the ordinary type; the men of whom I am always thinking, and whose emotions and convictions I understand and represent, are men like those whom I meet at railway employees□ conventions, or out on ranches, or down at the lodge, where I come in contact with the bayman, the oyster-sloop captain, the express agent, the brakeman, the farmer, the small storekeeper, the man who is my cousin□□ gardener, my own chauffeur, and others like them.[xliii] [xliii]

Although Roosevelt may have been reaching in saying □that these are men like me and that I am like them,□ he claimed that this bond prevented him from falling into □the dangerous frame of mind□ of treating democracy as a kind of □superstition□ or □fetishistic□ abstraction unrelated to the actual conditions of life.

Applying democratic ideals and reforms to politics had to be measured by the practical consequences of such efforts. Roosevelt praised the realistic steps taken in Wisconsin to develop responsible procedures of initiative, referendum, and recall.[xliv] [xliv] Yet these measures when taken to an extreme could end up depriving □the people absolutely of all power over their representatives.□ If New Yorkers, in the name of popular rule, attempted to elect □the forty-five thousand employees of the city, it would merely result in depriving people absolutely of all power over their representatives.□[xlv] [xlv] Roosevelt defended the idea that popular rule was not vitiated by citizens or officials who delegate to others □the task of appointing government agents, or of passing the great majority of laws that ought to be passed.□[xlvi] [xlvi] The delegation of authority, rather than the surrendering authority, □is merely a method of making authority more efficient.□ On the question of just how far the delegation ought to go, this is a question □of pure expediency, and the only way it can be tested is by its results.□ Switzerland offered the example of a country where the initiative had given an alert and opportunistic minority an □improper advantage□ over the majority. The likely result of this arrangement is that the majority will □be bound in the end to protect itself without much regard to theory by facing facts as they are.□[xlvii] [xlvii] Along other lines, Roosevelt pointed out that true democracy of the New England town meeting would prove unworkable in big cities like Boston and Los Angeles. Ultimately, the fate of American democracy was, from Roosevelt□□ perspective, a much larger question than perfecting methods of governance.

Roosevelt took exception with the moralistic proposition urged upon him by a friend and California progressive: □To us it seems the one thing in the whole scheme of human affairs that we can believe in without limitation. . . [is] that the people should rule.□[xlviii] [xlviii] Roosevelt asked his correspondent if this meant □that the Chinese and Japanese should come in unlimited quantities, and should rule you?□ He doubted that any Socialist Party in the United States could exist longer than a day if □it applied its doctrines to black men and yellow men.□ One need not

ignore, or overlook, Roosevelt□□ views on race (which were little different from other American leaders) in order to wrestle with his proposition that certain people may find democracy less appealing than other forms of political rule. He was drawn to Emerson□□ caveat that the most unpleasant truth is a safer traveling companion than the most pleasant falsehood.

Roosevelt□□ friend countered that he would rather have bad government with democracy than good government without it, since □government is only a means to an end to give man a chance to be happy, and to develop the best that is in him. Its function as a maker of men is almost Godlike.□[xlix] [xlix] Roosevelt retorted that the function of democracy in Haiti, over the last hundred years, has been more □devil-like□ than □Godlike.□ Even if the rule of the majority is central to democracy, in America and elsewhere, Roosevelt understood that insisting □the majority is always right may be just as slavish and vicious as insistence on the doctrine that the King can do no wrong.□ After all, a large majority of whites in the states of South Carolina and Mississippi decided in 1861 to leave the union and plunge the country into four years of dreadful war. He wondered if life for the majority in Morocco□an everyday world of unrelenting cruelty and oppression□would not be improved if France □took hold of them and did for them what they have done in Algiers.□ The rule of the majority is good only if the majority has the will and moral temperament to do right. Controversial racial and cultural views left Roosevelt skeptical on the question of whether democracy travels as a vital force in world politics. He certainly wanted to avoid indiscriminate and utterly cynical language □which dampens the zeal and dims the burning vision□ of those who valiantly struggle against tyranny and for human rights. But he wanted to avoid, even more, words □which will deceive good men for whom life is not easy into following wrong paths, or into preparing for bitter disappointments...by trusting in promises which cannot be fulfilled.□[l] [l]

Yet Roosevelt himself was not immune to the □agreeable abstraction□ that the highest form of democracy and patriotism is □social justice□□making the American system redistribute wealth in order for all citizens to have a decent life. No major American party candidate running for office today talks as powerfully about □distributive justice□ as Roosevelt did in the 1912 presidential race.[li] [li] He exhorted Americans □to strive for social and industrial justice, achieved through the genuine rule of the people.□[lii] [lii] The promise of equal opportunity and self-government had become imperiled by the by the □vulgar thieving partnerships of the corporations and the bosses.□ Roosevelt scorned tyranny by the few or the many, though he left little doubt about the kind of tyranny most injurious to the American body politic.

> . . . we are today suffering today from the tyranny of minorities. It is a small minority that is grabbing our coal-deposits, our water-powers, and our harbor fronts. A small minority is battening on the sale of adulterated foods and drugs. It is a small minority that lies behind monopolies and trusts. It is a small minority that stands behind . . . the sweat shops, and the whole calendar of social and

> industrial injustice. . . . If on this new continent we merely build another country of great but unjustly divided material prosperity . . . we merely set the greed of envy against the greed of arrogance, and thereby destroy the material well-being of all of us.[liii] [liii]

If Roosevelt felt that the meaning of democracy is confined neither to governmental methods nor social ideals, then where is one to look for a definitive statement? Here one can appreciate Blum□□ statement (though itself something of an exaggeration) that Roosevelt had a good deal of difficulty in defining his beliefs.[liv] [liv] The route taken in this paper is to identify democratic norms that entered into Roosevelt□□ thinking on the purposes of executive power in its relation to the public interest. This focus throws into broad relief the tension, sometimes unsettled and problematic, between the sources of individual morality and a government that also has ethical obligations to public goods associated with the general welfare.

□I do not care for the mere form and show of power,□ Roosevelt confided in his Autobiography. □I care precisely for the use that could be made of the substance.□[lv] [lv] Power as a disembodied ideal was no more attractive than virtue as a hypothetical construct on the blackboard. He acted upon □the theory that the executive power was limited only by specific restrictions and prohibitions appearing in the Constitution or imposed by Congress under its constitutional powers.□ Every executive officer, he suggested, is a □steward of the people bound . . . affirmatively to do all he could for people, and not to content himself with the negative merit of keeping his talents undamaged in a napkin.□ According to this understanding of presidential power, Roosevelt deliberately set out to □broaden the use of executive power . . . for the public welfare.□[lvi] [lvi] New social and economic realities confronting the nation required governmental activism to ensure the moral renewal of American life. That renewal hinged, not upon state power as an end in itself, but upon the acceptance by individuals of certain duties to one another as well as to a nation that protected their freedom. In 1910, Roosevelt defended his program of □The New Nationalism□ with the following reminder:

> The object of government is the welfare of the people. The material progress and prosperity of a nation are desirable chiefly so far as they lead to the moral and material welfare of all good citizens. Just in proportion as the average man and woman are honest, capable of good judgment and high ideals, active in public affairs . . . just so far . . . we may count our civilization a success. We must have . . . a genuine and permanent moral awakening, without which no wisdom of legislation or administration really means anything; and, on the other hand, we must try to secure the social and economic legislation without which any improvement due to purely moral agitation is necessarily evanescent.[lvii] [lvii]

The true object of democracy is not merely to guarantee each citizen his rights. The general distribution of welfare was, in Roosevelt□ □ thinking, prerequisite for still another purpose: to ensure □that each man shall thereby be enabled better to do his duty.□ A man who □receives what he has not earned and does not earn,□ like the man □who does not render service in full for all that he has,□ is an outcast to democracy.[lviii] [lviii] The kind of power that Roosevelt believed in does aim at order, but this physical equilibrium is upheld by a moral equilibrium among the constituent parts.

Roosevelt saw more strengths than weaknesses behind the new industrialism in American economic life. He was enough of a realist who took seriously the impact of economic factors on the power and prestige of a nation. Material conditions, however, had changed rapidly in the twentieth century. Doctrines of laissez-faire competition and limited government were no longer the controlling circumstances by which people would have to impose order on themselves. Individualism was dwarfed by new and immense corporations, by new realities of urban life, by large associations of laborers and farmers. □This is an era,□ Roosevelt once wrote, □of federation and combination.□[lix] [lix] In his last annual message delivered to Congress in 1908, the president declared:

> . . . the chief breakdown is in dealing with the new relations that arise from the mutualism, the interdependence of our time. Every new social relation begets a new type of wrong-doing□of sin, to use an old-fashioned word□and many years always elapse before society is able to turn this sin into crime which can be effectively punished by law.[lx] [lx]

New combinations in business and industry were to be supervised and controlled but not torn asunder. □In curbing and regulating the combinations of capital which are . . .injurious. . . ,□ he instructed Congress in his second annual message, □we must be careful not to stop the great enterprises which have legitimately reduced the cost of production, not to abandon the place which our country has won in the leadership of the international industrial world. . . .□[lxi] [lxi]

Admittedly, Roosevelt strengthened the powers of the president. He was the first president to intervene in order to bring about a negotiated settlement of a labor dispute; he was the first president who proposed binding arbitration; and he was the first president who threatened to use troops to seize a strikebound industry. Corporations and other associational groupings□often treated as □artificial□ individuals□jeopardized the very meaning of equality between individuals. Government, far from being the enemy of individual liberty, is the vehicle by which individuals combine to act in their own self-defense. Yet historians have pointed out

that □Roosevelt□□ doctrine of consolidation did not quite possess him.□[lxii] [lxii] In the final analysis, morality in politics was defined more by the individual and less by the government.

> . . . The most important elements in any man□□ career must be the sum of those qualities which, in the aggregate, we speak of as character. If he has not got it, then no law that the wit of man can devise, no administration of the law by the . . . strongest executive, will avail to help him. We must have the right kind of character□character that makes a man . . . a good man in the home, a good father, a good husband□that makes a man a good neighbor. You must have that, and . . . in addition, you must have the kind of law and kind of administration of the law which will give those qualities in the private citizen the best possible chance of development.[lxiii] [lxiii]

Roosevelt□□ Strenuous Life and the Rediscovery of American National Character

No topic has been more often cited□or more often misunderstood□as a symbol of Theodore Roosevelt□□ world view than the strenuous life. Historians and political scientists have often ignored the way that this motif, at least in Roosevelt□□ estimation, transcends the boundary between domestic politics and foreign policy. In numerous public roles□as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Vice President, and President of the United States□Roosevelt defined the nation□□ obligations abroad as an extension of the duties that citizens have to one another and to themselves. Far from being the shrill boast of some madcap warmonger, or an ideology of brutal militarism, the concept moved Roosevelt to establish a connection between the moral bulwark of democratic society and the normative foundations of the national interest in world affairs. The attributes of national character affected not only the choices on the path to internal political equilibrium but also the challenges confronting America□□ foreign policy role in the global balance of power. This section explores Roosevelt□□ interpretation of the strenuous life when he first introduced it into American□□ political vocabulary in 1899.

Laying out the requirements of the strenuous life□in a speech before the Hamilton Club of Chicago on April 10, 1899□Roosevelt wanted to illuminate those qualities □most American in the American character.□[lxiv] [lxiv] Actually, Roosevelt preferred the Italian translation *Vigor di Vita* as a more appropriate designation of the theme he wanted to convey. Later, in his *Autobiography*, he acknowledged the experiences of hardship and sacrifice that he frequently celebrated in literary form grew out of a □philosophy. . .of bodily vigor as a method of getting that vigor of soul without which vigor of the body counts for nothing.□[lxv] [lxv] The vigor of life,

according to Roosevelt, is inseparable from two distinct kinds of ability by which personal success can be measured.

First of all, there is a kind of success□whether in the big or small tasks of life□that is crowned by some natural power or innate gift in a singular individual. Accomplishments in this category derive from a skill or virtue that no amount of training or will-power can recreate in ordinary men. Lincoln□□ Gettysburg speech, Keats□ □Ode to a Grecian Urn,□ Nelson□□ victory at Trafalgar, or even the Olympian able to run a hundred yards in just short of ten seconds□all of these feats occur to the exceptional man □who has in him the something additional which the ordinary man does not have.□[lxvi] [lxvi] Roosevelt, whether in political biographies or historical narratives, consistently paid homage to the intellectual and artistic gifts of human nature. He was modest enough to confess that this literary inclination was due, in no small part, to how elusive those virtuoso skills seemed to his own existence. Indeed, he claimed that most of all of the successes that he had ever won were of an altogether different type.

A much more common type of success is that □which comes to the man who differs from his fellows not by the kind of quality which he possesses buy by the degree of development which he has given that quality.□[lxvii] [lxvii] Here Roosevelt had in mind those attributes of temperament that can be cultivated by all those of sound mind and body. While one can learn inspiration and lofty enthusiasm from the first type of success mentioned above, the second teaches that few great objects of life can be won without hard labor. This kind of success requires something more than the mere multiplication of energy; in addition, it hinges upon responsible and mature judgment through careful planning and working long hours in advance. Roosevelt□□ own awkward and sickly youth awakened within him a need, not simply to combat feelings of inadequacy, but to train himself in the ways of the soul and the spirit. Fearlessness, far from being a license for immoderate behavior, is the motor for self-confidence and self-understanding. Late in life, Roosevelt recalled a passage from one of the nautical adventures of the popular nineteenth-century author Frederick Marryat. The captain of a British man-of-war explained to the hero of this intrepid tale how to master the sense of fearlessness. Knowing how every man is anxious and unsettled when he first sees action, the captain advised the officer that the trick is to fortify an inner resolve through which one can act□and carry out orders□just as if the element of fear was absent. Pretense for the apprehensive warrior gives way to reality, as Roosevelt paraphrased Marryat, by sheer dint of practicing fearlessness when he does not feel it. □This was,□ Roosevelt acknowledged, □the theory upon which I went.□[lxviii] [lxviii] Reasonable men, then, could prepare for the battles of life that ordinarily might be anticipated over the course of time. What matters even more, he thought, is the constant habituation by which men learn to behave well in sudden and unexpected emergencies. Desires are meaningless, however, if they remain pretty daydreams.

> Let him dream about being a fearless man, and the more he dreams the better he will be, always provided he does his best to realize the dream in practice. He can

> do his part honorable and well provided only he. . . schools himself to think of danger merely as something to be faced and overcome, and regards life itself. . . not as something to be thrown away, but as a pawn to be promptly hazarded whenever the hazard is warranted by the larger interests of the great game in which we are all engaged.[lxix] [lxix]

The □great game□ was a metaphor for life itself or, more specifically, the actions through which individuals and societies achieve meaning in history. The strenuous life, far from being the paean of the conqueror, might take in Emerson as well as Lincoln; it might consist in writing poetry, or studying Italian songs, or investigating the labor problem or the condition of the poor.[lxx] [lxx] Roosevelt did not conceive of action of self-mastery in an intellectual vacuum. It is worth noting that he began his speech at the Hamilton Club by expressing a concern about the normative or moral order of the citizenry and body politic. Speaking more as emphatic preacher than dispassionate philosopher, he exhorted the audience to think about the ultimate goals and triumphs for which great men and greater nations strive. Greatness, in Roosevelt□□ mind, was far-removed from the sort of national vanity that makes a success story of one□□ faith or takes for granted a manifest destiny for the chosen people. Eschewing a life of slothful ease, as well as the belief that peace is always the first consideration of the moral-minded, Roosevelt embraced the life of toil and effort. Success is the reward won by the man who does not shrink from the hardship and danger of life. That sacrifice might be combined with high purpose was mirrored by Tennyson□□ Ulysses:

> Souls that have toil□d, and wrought, and thought with me--
>
> That ever with a frolic welcome took
>
> The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
>
> Free hearts, free foreheads□you and I are old;
>
> Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
>
> Death closes all: but something ere the end
>
> Some work of noble note, may yet be done.[lxxi] [lxxi]

What Americans demanded of themselves would have to be demanded of the nation as a whole.

The strenuous life transcends all socio-economic categories of citizenship. The leisure enjoyed by the rich was not, in Roosevelt□□ opinion, to be construed as inactivity or idleness. In fact, those fortunate enough to be freed from the necessity of working for a livelihood were all the more obligated □to carry on. . . nonremunerative work in science, in letters, in art, in exploration, in historical research□*work of the type we most need in this country, the successful carrying out of which reflects most honor upon the nation*.[lxxii] [lxxii] The virile qualities necessary to prevail in the strife of actual life were not, Roosevelt insisted, incompatible with the man who never wrongs his neighbor or who is prompt to assist a friend. Whether for a writer or a general, whether in the fields of politics or exploration, nothing of lasting value can be won save by exertion. Failure is not half as bad as the unwillingness to strive for success. Self-indulgence and momentary gratification not only disqualify one from serious work in the world; they also make of man □simply a cumberer of the earth□□ surface□ and unsuited to □hold his own with his fellows.□[lxxiii] [lxxiii] The important thing was to find something worth doing, and do it with all your might. □Get action!□ he cries. □Don□t flinch! Don□t foul! Hit the line hard!□ Healthy states can only exist, he asserted, if the character of citizens was formed by wholesome and vigorous lives.

Roosevelt often spoke of the strenuous life as a personal ethic applicable within the family and household. Children raised properly would see first hand the kind of forceful and industrious traits of hard-working parents. Fathers and mothers had no more important task in life than the moral upbringing of the young. Heroic literature and fables might embolden the imagination of a child with undreamt of possibilities; parents, however, had to take the initiative in training their children how to overcome difficulties rather than shirk them, and how to measure success in circumstances of risk and opposition. Roosevelt□□ traditional outlook on gender and family issues notwithstanding, he did not exempt motherhood and child raising from the same profile in courage. He recoiled from the melancholy words of the French writer Alphonse Daudet, who spoke of □the fear of maternity, the haunting terror of the young wife of the present day.□[lxxiv] [lxxiv] Roosevelt□□ reverence for women moved along other lines:

> The birth pangs make all men debtors of all women; and these men have. . . touched the lowest abyss of brutality and depravity who do not recognize something holy in the names of wife and mother. No man, not even the soldier who does his duty, stands quite on the same level with the wife and mother who has done her duty.[lxxv] [lxxv]

Similarly, Roosevelt was as apt to deliver a moral censure on women who feared motherhood as he was upon men who feared work or righteous war. Men and women who could not meet their duties in the family could hardly be expected to meet the moral requirements of citizenship in a democracy.

The strenuous life was no less a symbol for the social and political standing of great powers on the international stage. Roosevelt had little patience for those who turned away□out of conceit or intellectual snobbery□from the stirring of patriotism or the memories of a glorious history. Far better it was, he believed, for a great nation to □dare mighty things,□ even at the risk of failure, than to live sheepishly in □the gray twilight that knows not victory or defeat.□[lxxvi] [lxxvi] Roosevelt drew an analogy from the Civil War to illustrate his point. If union soldiers, in 1861, had believed that war was inherently evil and that peace was an overriding priority, then the nation might have saved thousands of lives and millions of dollars. But the attainment of peace is not as easy as the desire for it. Had Lincoln not endured the months of gloom and temporary setbacks, then America might have lost its national soul as well as its right to command respect as a sovereign entity. The blackness of sorrow and struggle□the years of turmoil endured as part of a righteous cause□were not without their ethical consequences; for, in the end, the slaves were liberated and the union restored.

American leaders, at the end of the nineteenth century, may not have faced the same colossal obstacles that confronted the generation of Grant, Lincoln, and Sheridan. The struggle for national survival gave way to a larger contest among nations seeking to dominate an increasingly precarious and global balance of power. Americans, Roosevelt advised, could not afford to play the part of China and isolate themselves from momentous developments in world politics. Conflicting national interest among imperial powers was inescapable. The only real choice was in the way these new diplomatic challenges would be met. As much as Roosevelt believed that war with Spain in 1898 was unavoidable, so too were America□□ responsibilities in Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. As a keen disciple of Alfred Thayer Mahan□□ school of geopolitics, Roosevelt understood how a strong navy, and access to strategic waterways, constituted the front line of a nation□□ power. Although he could sometimes revel in that mighty lift that □thrilled stern men with empires in their brains,□ the undertow of hubris was qualified by his often-stated conviction that American must do its □share of the world□□ work.□ It was no less moral for Americans to □help bring order out of chaos□ on islands and in countries seeking to free themselves from the grip of foreign tyranny. A policy of staunch isolationism□the sort advocated by □an assemblage of well-to-do hucksters who care nothing for what happens beyond□□would be self-defeating. The very foundation of national wealth and commercial success was rooted in an increasingly interdependent world. Interdependence made it all but certain that nations would have wider interests with far more points of contact, and friction, around the world. A thriving economy at home meant that the United States would have to hold its own in the competition for naval and trade advantages. The nation would also have to build up power outside its own borders, taking advantage of an isthmian canal to insure openings to oceans of the East and West. Roosevelt understood clearly how economic dimensions of national power affected the struggle for military security abroad.

Moreover, America□□ national interest could not be reduced to making the world safe for monopoly capitalism and overseas corporate investments. This issue struck Roosevelt as a larger philosophical question about the meaning of politics itself. What he characterized as □scrambling commercialism. . .heedless of the higher life {and} the life of aspiration□ was a sign of inner weakness and decay.[lxxvii] [lxxvii] Commercial prosperity and material well being are little more than means to an end, simply components (even if indispensable) that go into the making of all that is distinctive about a nation□□ culture and political heritage. What distinguishes great statesmen from successful captains of industry is the capacity of the former to act upon □loftier duties□ to the nation as a whole.

Intangible components of national power□honor and prestige□were no less important for a new activism in American diplomacy. The □echoes of Glory□ from Santiago to Manila left a □legacy of duty.□ This legacy was both political and moral. On the one hand, a policy of drift or withdrawal could prompt a rival power to become involved□and eclipse American influence□in areas of strategic importance. The nation□□ credibility would suffer as would foreign policy interests in and outside the Western Hemisphere. On the other hand, the ultimate fate of the islanders could not easily be brushed aside. If the United States could only claim to have driven out a medieval tyranny, without responding to the savage anarchy that was sure to follow, then America might stand accused of moral bankruptcy before □the great tasks set [by] modern civilization.□[lxxviii] [lxxviii] Roosevelt knew only too well that manipulating the life of other nations carried its share of risks. He warned his countrymen about allowing arrogance, and the excitement of victory, overshadow the strain that the success of war would place on American power. The mere projection of military force in distant lands would not enable American policy-makers to realize underlying political goals. In addition, the work of provincial administrators and military governors demanded a high order of integrity in grappling with the problems of modernization and political development. Maintaining the accountability of public servants, as well as living up to the new demands on national strength and resources, were all a function of the nation□□ self-respect. Foreign policy could not be entirely separated from the moral fabric of American politics.

Roosevelt believed the conquests of 1898 brought novel challenges that, in both form and substance, would recur for subsequent generations of American diplomats. Puerto Rico was not large enough to stand alone; the island, he suggested, would have to be governed □primarily in the interest of its own people.□[lxxix] [lxxix] At some point in the future, he prophesied in 1899, Cuba might decide whether to become independent or an integral part of the United States. Whatever Cuba□□ fate might hold, American military representatives on the island would have to exercise □infinite tact, judgment, moderation, and courage□ in balancing competing goals. Law enforcement was necessary to curtail rioting, mob violence, and the violation of property. Yet law enforcement would prove to be little more than a half-measure if proper regard was not paid to those inhabitants who fought at great costs for Cuban liberty.[lxxx] [lxxx]

The case of the Philippines, Roosevelt acknowledged, offered up even more problems. Class divisions, along with ingrained differences between Muslims and Christians, made self-government virtually unthinkable. As the years passed, Roosevelt grew increasingly skeptical about America□□ hold on the Philippines. As the dust settled from war, however, America had to prove its metal as a civilizing power. He was impatient with those who feared governing the islands. He had even less patience for those whose opposition to America□□ involvement was cloaked in □a pretense of humanitarianism□□i.e., those who would cant about □liberty□ and □consent of the governed□ in order to □excuse themselves for their unwillingness to play the part of men.□[lxxxi] [lxxxi] On this logic, Roosevelt declared, American might as well leave Arizona to the Apaches and forswear interference on any Indian reservation. A few years later, President Roosevelt tired to endow the island dependencies□both in the Caribbean and the Pacific□with modest economic advantages. As John Morton Blum notes, □he defied the sugar lobby, the Democrats, and a considerable number of Republicans to obtain for Cuba a tariff advantage essential for the economic stability of the government he had helped to establish there.□[lxxxii] [lxxxii] He would have done likewise for the Philippines had the Republican Old Guard permitted him. But it would not. If President Roosevelt had not known it before, he knew thereafter that no consideration of rational economics, of the general welfare, and assuredly not the □White Man□□ burden□ could touch the Grand Old Party□□ most sacred of cows.[lxxxiii] [lxxxiii]

For all of his talk about the □supremacy of our flag,□ as well as □America□□ national renown□ as a great power, Roosevelt objected to a narrow self-interest insulated from □the great work of uplifting mankind.□ He preached the strenuous life as a way to defend the power of principle as much as the principle of power. He asked us to understand that observing good faith and justice toward all nations entails an inward responsibility. Roosevelt took as an article of faith the guiding principle laid out by George Washington in his Farewell Address: □Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a Nation with its virtue?□[lxxxiv] [lxxxiv] Ethical desiderata in crafting foreign policy for a new world order, and for a new century, was the theme of Roosevelt□□ closing remarks to his Chicago audience on the meaning of the strenuous life.

> The twentieth century looms before us big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely. . .slothful ease and ignoble peace. . .then the bolder and stronger powers will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world. Let us. . .boldly face the life of strife. . .resolute to uphold righteousness by deed and by word; resolute to be both honest and brave, to serve high ideals, yet to use practical methods.[lxxxv] [lxxxv]

Clearly, Roosevelt□□ usage of the word strife embraced moral struggle and the will to succeed in the clash of ideals within and between civilizations. He was seasoned enough as a politician to understand that universal ethical imperatives could be realized only in the armchair of the political philosopher. But a politician need not strive for perfection in order to achieve solid moral gains for himself and his nation. Roosevelt□□ recourse to practical methods and the ancient virtue of prudence (a willingness to consider consequences of seemingly moral action) did not invalidate high principles so much as adjust those principles to circumstances. Prudence, in contrast to the Manichaean wellsprings of the self-righteous, affords the diplomat an important procedural standard if policy ends are to be made consistent with policy means. It mattered considerably to Roosevelt that elected officials deliberate openly on first principles and □make certain that the strife is justified.□ Linking external commitments to domestic vitality is essential for a nation that is seeking□at the turn of yet another century□to salvage its own economic liberty, in addition to fighting for the political rights of the victims of tyranny in distant lands.

Conclusion

The preceding pages provide neither a complete intellectual biography of Theodore Roosevelt nor a thorough review of his political and diplomatic careers. Attention has been limited to the ideals□historical, ethical, and philosophical□that are central to his political thought and statesmanship. While Roosevelt never pretended to be a systematic thinker, and sometimes treated profound issues in great haste and with superficial generalization, he was remarkably alive to the philosophical ferment of his age. His impatience with □arm-chair□ theorizing and the □parlor games□ of academicians does not detract from the fact that he spent a fair amount of his time in their company. Few other public officials of his day would have published essays on the works of Henri Bergson, Carlos Reyles, Henry Osborn Taylor, Émile Boutroux, William James, Herbert Croly, and Walter Lippmann. In fact, part of the difficulty in distilling Roosevelt□□ intellect can be explained by the tendency of his restless mind to travel over such diverse terrain. Roosevelt himself was the most eminent intellectual to sit in the White House since John Quincy Adams. Never had a president demonstrated such a considered respect for the opinions of experts□of welfare workers and social critics, of natural scientists and boxing instructors; and never had there been such a triumph of applied theory as distinguished as the conservation movement under Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt.[lxxxvi] [lxxxvi]

Jürgen Gebhardt reminds us that Roosevelt□□ political universe was inextricably tied to the forces of Progressivism and Populism in American life. Both articulated the psychological makeup of the Republic in the form of a civil theology responsive to developments during the

waning nineteenth century. The basic structure of these social protest movements contains all the elements of traditional political revivalism. Roosevelt□□ concern with human nature, history, power, and morality must be evaluated in this larger context. In Gebhardt□□ words:

> The social-critical jeremiad takes the separate analysis of economic crisis, social conflicts, misuse of power, and concentration of power in economics and politics in particular, and a chaotic urbanism and industrialism in general, and shapes it into an apocalyptic pattern of corruption and vice. The looming punishment of a dissolution of the American order had to be countered with a national purification and reformational awakening of the citizens in order to restore the order of man and society.[lxxxvii [lxxxvii]]

This political revivalism encompassed the raw evangelism of William Jennings Bryan as well as the moralistic national-republicanism of Theodore Roosevelt and the ethical-political spiritualism of Woodrow Wilson. Even if Roosevelt and his Progressive allies were concerned less by complete economic breakdown□and more by moral and social degradation leading to the collapse of democracy□they were still optimists of a sort. Just as the sinner can be cleansed and saved, so a nation could be redeemed if the citizens awoke to their responsibilities.[lxxxviii [lxxxviii]]

NOTES

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