AN UNFORTUNATE, IF UNDERSTANDABLE, effect of the East-West conflict has been to allow those of us in the Free World to define ourselves disproportionately in terms of what we oppose about communism while giving only superficial attention to what it is of a positive nature that we favor. Now that the Soviet empire appears to be disintegrating and questions emerge concerning the proper direction of a possible post-Cold War order, the time may be ripe to reflect seriously on central issues about man and society that have been widely neglected for a long period. Not the least of the issues deserving deeper scholarly scrutiny is the nature of democracy itself, a matter that is not nearly so transparent as believed by some in the United States who are urging a crusade to spread what they call “democracy” to the farthest reaches of the world.

From the dawn of our republic, in fact, a tension has existed between two fundamentally opposed conceptions of democratic government. Both can be called “democratic” in that both ultimately rest on the “will of the people.” Yet despite this superficial resemblance, they are radically different in their notions (a) of how the people’s “will” should—and should not—be transformed into specific policies and (b) of what the term “the people” actually means.

One of these views—known variously as indirect, representative, or constitutional democracy—holds that the will of the citizenry should be reflected in public policy—not directly, however, but as filtered through the deliberative processes of various representative institutions and subject to certain self-imposed restraints, the latter intended to foster consensus and to safeguard minorities from the arbitrary use of majority power. The contrasting viewpoint tends to be less wary of the potential for abuse of unchecked majority rule and, consequently, to resent such institutional restraints, seeing them as unnecessarily inefficient and undemocratic. As is true of the constitutional theorists, the supporters of direct, majoritarian or plebiscitary democracy have their differences of emphasis and approach; but in general it is fair to describe their ideal as that system which most readily converts the popular will as expressed by a majority (or plurality) of voters at the polls into specific governmental policies.

James Madison is perhaps the archetypal champion, at least in the American context, of the indirect form of popularly based government. Like Edmund Burke, Madison believed that a representative owes his constituents not a slavish subservience to their momentary opinions, which in any case are notoriously subject to abrupt shifts of direction, but rather the benefit of “his mature judgment” and “enlightened conscience” regarding what is in the best interests of the community as a whole.  

“Madison drew a distinction between a ‘pure democracy,’ which entailed direct participation by the great body of citizens in the governing process, and a ‘republic,’ in which the authority to govern was entrusted ‘to a small number of citizens elected by the rest.’”

Madison drew a distinction between a “pure democracy,” which entailed direct participation by the great body of citizens in the governing process, and a “republic,” in which the authority to govern was entrusted “to a small number of citizens elected by the rest.” The advantage of the latter method, he wrote in the Federalist 10, is that it serves “to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.”

An early opponent of the Madisonian view, ironically,
was Madison's close friend and fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson. Although it is possible to find contradictory strains in Jefferson's voluminous writings, his heart was on the side of direct popular control. His definition of republicanism, for example, bears a striking resemblance to what Madison had termed "pure democracy." And while, to Madison, direct rule by the people could "admit of no cure for the mischiefs of faction" since it contained "nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party," Jefferson had no such qualms. In its truest form, he wrote approvingly, the term republic "means a government by its citizens in mass, acting directly and personally, according to rules established by the majority." And where a large population or extensive territory made this impracticable, he added, the next best thing "would be where the powers of the government, being divided, should be exercised each by representatives chosen either pro hac vice [for the occasion], or for such short terms as should render secure the duty of expressing the will of their constituents."

Clearly, the chasm separating these two conceptions of popular government is wide. And though the initial clash between the two sides issued, with the ratification of the Constitution, in a triumph for the proponents of the indirect, limited model, this in no way terminated the debate. Instead, the antagonism between the two paradigms has stirred a continuing controversy, as heated today as it was two centuries ago.

Throughout most of our history the theoretical ammunition favoring a more plebiscitarian form of rule in the United States has come primarily from the political left and from those who have preferred a more activist role for the state in social and economic affairs. Examples of this impulse have included periodic moves to extend the suffrage, the adoption in 1913 of an amendment providing for the direct election of senators, the widespread adoption of the direct popular primary for the selection of party candidates, and the use at the local and state levels of procedures such as the initiative, referendum, and recall.

The philosophy underlying all of these changes could be called, in James Burnham's colorful phrase, the "Divine Right of Demos, of Everyman." It is the belief that the "uninhibited will of the mass of the people" should have "a decisive influence over government policy," and that every institution or custom that could possibly interfere with such influence ought to be abolished. It is this same streamlining passion that has fueled the moves by congressional liberals in recent decades to weaken the seniority system, particularly in the House of Representatives; to make it easier to shut off Senate debate (by reducing the number of votes needed for cloture); and, albeit unsuccessfully, to eliminate the role of the Electoral College in the presidential selection process.
Such efforts to “smooth out the process” have received enthusiastic intellectual support from left-of-center scholars such as James MacGregor Burns and, until he belatedly discovered the dangers of an “imperial presidency,” Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Burns, in fact, has devoted much of his career to bemoaning what he perceives as a “deadlock” in our national government resulting from the Madisonian tradition, and for this reason his writings provide an excellent example of contemporary plebiscitarian thinking.

If we had to single out one key point upon which Burns’ disagreement with Madison (and, by implication, the other Framers of the Constitution) hinges, it probably could be found in Burns’ belief that Madison and his colleagues at the Philadelphia convention were far too distrustful of the people. While Madison argued that checks and balances (i.e., a division of powers among the several levels and branches of government, each responsible to separate constituencies and subject to different terms of office) were necessary to prevent majorities bent on injustice from arbitrarily inflicting harm on other citizens or the community at large, Burns believes such precautions to be excessive.

The trouble with the Madisonian system, he writes, is that “it requires us to await a wide consensus before acting.” This, he complains, makes it unduly difficult for the majority to work its will; hence it is undemocratic and unfair. In place of the present system Burns proposes what he calls the “Jeffersonian model” of majority rule. According to Burns, Jefferson the practical politician (as distinguished from the theorist who paid lip service to the idea of limited government) carried out a policy of vigorous governmental action—a policy made successful by means of strong presidential leadership, backed up by a unified and disciplined majority party. Burns praises Jefferson for having used his position as head of a great majority coalition to cut through the separation-of-powers machinery, imposing his program on Congress. In our own day, Burns would like to see the government shaped more in this mold, towards which end he suggests numerous reforms, including the centralization of party control at the national level, the federalization of election laws, and the imposition of greater party discipline over members of Congress.

The advantage of the “Jeffersonian formula of majority rule,” according to Burns, is that it allows more government action than the Madisonian model of checks and balances. Once a majority party had been pieced together—no easy job—and its leaders had taken over the three branches of the national government, the majority could govern rather freely and vigorously within its broad mandate, as Jefferson did. . . . [The Jeffersonian formula required leaders to gain and keep the support of a simple majority of the people—say 55 per cent—behind federal action, while the Madisonians demanded clearance with a far larger proportion of the people (since any major group held a veto power).]

The reason for Burns’ impatience with constitutional obstacles, writes Professor Claes Ryn, is that he wants a system in which decisive power belongs to the numerical national majority and in which political candidates are members of national parties with distinct, well-defined platforms, so that elections can in effect become national plebiscites on alternative government policies.

Ryn goes on to say that, if Burns “sees the danger of political arbitrariness, he is apparently less disturbed by it than by the risk that the popular majority might not get its way.” The same could be said about many other liberal and progressive thinkers going back at least to Woodrow Wilson’s time.

Conservatives, on the other hand, have tended to put much greater stock in the “balance of checks” built into the system by the Framers and in the assessment of human nature that inspired such safeguards. Irving Babbitt, James Burnham, Willmoore Kendall, Russell Kirk, Robert Nisbet, Claes Ryn, Peter Viereck—the list of this century’s thinking men of the right and near right who have cautioned against what they perceived to be the too-optimistic estimate of human goodness undergirding the trend toward direct democracy is extensive. There are of course many differences among these writers, some far-reaching. With the authors of the Federalist, however, all share this insight: that, if men were angels, no organized system of restraint (i.e., government) would be necessary. But not being angels, men must be restrained; and this is as true of the mass of men collectively—even though they comprise a majority—as it is of each taken singly.

But though it has generally been the populists of the left who have promoted the concept of direct democracy while conservatives have resisted those efforts, this pattern has been changing. Perhaps the most radical thrust toward plebiscitarianism to emerge in recent years was the proposed constitutional amendment to establish a national initiative. Under such a mechanism, which first came to serious attention in 1977, the voters could act directly on national legislation, bypassing both the law-making authority of the Congress and the presidential veto power. It is hard to imagine another proposal that could do more in a single step to change the nature of our system than this one. Not only would it short-circuit the separation of powers that was so painstakingly crafted by the Framers, but it would weaken the protection to the less populous states and regions that was provided for by giving to each state an equal voice in the Senate. Yet the chief sponsors of this scheme when it emerged a decade ago were young House Republicans led by then-Representative Jack Kemp of New York. The amendment sponsored by Kemp (which still has supporters though it is not being pushed actively in Congress at present) would have allowed legislation on virtually
any subject to be put before the voters by public petition. Legislation approved by the voters would have become the law of the land, and, for a two-year period, would have been repealable only by a two-thirds vote of the full membership of both houses of Congress.

That persons widely regarded as conservatives would display this kind of enthusiasm for one of the most extreme devices of plebiscitary democracy was a startling development. To appreciate how startling, one need only contrast this endorsement of direct mass rule with the position stated in Senator Barry Goldwater's 1960 bestseller The Conscience of a Conservative. After describing the constitutional framework of checks and balances as "a system of restraints against the natural tendency of government to expand in the direction of absolutism," Goldwater added: "Was it then a Democracy the framers created? Hardly. The system of restraints, on the face of it, was directed not only against individual tyrants, but also against a tyranny of the masses."\footnote{15}

Here, then, are two well-known figures, both of whom have commanded a large following on the right; yet on one of the most persistent and troublesome questions of the modern age—viz., should ours remain a limited, representative form of popular government, or should we continue the drift toward a more direct, plebiscitarian approach?—their positions are diametrically opposed. What accounts for this divergence? It is possible that the Kemp position derives from merely tactical considerations—that, because popular opinion has shifted to the right in the years since the Goldwater book, Kemp sees a better chance of getting his favored policies approved by the voters than by the congressional enactment process. But assuming that the Kemp position represents more than political opportunism,\footnote{16} then the split must be grounded, whether consciously or unconsciously, in two radically conflicting, and ultimately irreconcilable, visions of human nature and the purpose of government.

The principles espoused in the Goldwater book are actually those which, having grown out of the long Western tradition of natural law, inspired the Founding Fathers. While the concept of natural law is subject to diverse interpretations, most of the Framers believed that there is a transcendent standard of justice, of morality, of right and wrong. They believed that this standard exists as an objective category, that it is discoverable by reason and independent of the subjective biases of men. The Framers believed further that men were duty-bound to subordinate themselves to this principle not only as individuals but in their corporate governmental capacity as well. Nor is there any doubt, as Willmoore Kendall has noted,\footnote{17} that, when the Framers used words such as "justice" and "injustice," they had something very definite in mind. Based on repeated references in the Federalist, it is clear that by justice the Framers meant the honest pursuit (purged of merely self-interested bias) of the "common good" of all, while by injustice they meant the subordination of the "general good" to "temporary or partial considerations."\footnote{18}

But if the Framers had little trouble defining justice, they harbored few illusions about the ease with which men could be expected to attain this ideal. To begin with, the general good often is not readily apparent; as Madison observed, it must be "discerned," and this requires both "wisdom" and considerable knowledge of existing factual circumstances. Worse, there is no guarantee that men even will attempt to support the just cause. On the contrary, there is every reason to expect "factions"—which, Madison noted pointedly, can comprise either a minority or a popular majority\footnote{19}—to promote their own interests at the expense of the common good. Consistent with traditional Western thought, the Framers understood that man is a creature of two minds. As a social and moral being, he wills what is truly good for the entire community, yet, as an imperfect and weak being, he also is torn by contrary passions and merely self-interested motives.

The source of "factions," wrote Madison, is to be found in the division of society into a multiplicity of conflicting interests—interests based, for example, on differences of locality, region, profession, economic status, religious persuasion and so forth, each competing for human loyalties.
But the solution is not to eliminate these institutions (as advocated, e.g., by a Jean-Jacques Rousseau\textsuperscript{20}), for our very liberty depends on them. Rather, the government itself should be designed to represent these associations in such manner that the interests of each will serve to check the unjust designs of the others. As Madison summed up his position in the \textit{Federalist} No. 51:

It is of great importance in a republic not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part. Different interests necessarily exist in different classes of citizens. If a majority be united by a common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure. There are but two methods of providing against this evil: the one by creating a will in the community independent of the majority— that is, of the society itself [i.e., an absolute monarch or dictator]; the other, by comprehending in the society so many separate descriptions of citizens as will render an unjust combination of a majority of the whole very improbable, if not impracticable. . . . The second method will be exemplified in the federal republic of the United States. Whilst all authority in it will be derived from and dependent on the society, the society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests and classes of citizens, that the rights of individuals, or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority.\textsuperscript{21}

The Framers well knew that even this system, so skillfully fashioned to allow “ambition to counter ambition”\textsuperscript{22} and thereby to protect all from the dangers of an unjust majority, was not in itself sufficient to guarantee justice. Since justice \textit{qua} justice is neither more nor less than that quality of will which transcends egotism, which subordinates private advantage to the needs of the common good, no amount of adjustment among competing groups that is motivated by enlightened self-interest alone will ever in itself constitute genuine morality.\textsuperscript{23} The Framers’ intention was less ambitious. In Madison’s words, since they could not remove “the causes of faction” (i.e., arbitrary self-interest), they would try to control “its effects.”\textsuperscript{24} Yet they knew that the incentives to compromise built into the Constitution through the separation of powers would, as John C. Calhoun was to write some years later, make “it the interest of each portion to conciliate and promote the interests of the others,” and would thereby “exert a powerful influence toward purifying and elevating the character of the government and the people, morally as well as politically.”\textsuperscript{25}

In short, the goal was, as nearly as possible in an imperfect world, to approximate justice. This, said Madison, is the end both of government and of civil society. Yet precisely because the world is imperfect— because not even the motives of the majority are necessarily just— the means to this end must be found in a system deliberately constructed to distribute power among “opposite and rival interests”; i.e., in a system of checks and balances.\textsuperscript{26}

The quest for justice as the end, the diffusion of power as the means— these are the two great pillars upon which the Constitution was erected. It is a grand edifice and one that conservatives have been loath to weaken for fear that the whole thing might crumble. Yet, as noted above, some right-of-center legislators, among them Jack Kemp, have broken out of this mold. Since these men are not theorists but policymakers engaged full time in the business of government, it probably would be demanding too much to expect them to have considered systematically all of the implications of moving toward direct democracy. But some indication of their thinking, at least in its broad outlines, may be found in the 1978 book \textit{The Way the World Works}\textsuperscript{27} by economic writer Jude Wanniski, who has been a close Kemp adviser and confidant.

What Wanniski terms his “political model” posits a goal for government that differs profoundly from the one propounded by the Framers. For the latter, as explained above, that goal was the promotion of justice, with justice conceived as that which results from transcending arbitrary self-interest in favor of what is good for the whole community. The Framers saw man as torn between two competing elements of will, the one manifested in the expansive desires and the other as a propensity to put a check on those desires— to weigh them against a more noble vision of what makes life worthwhile. It was not enough in their view for policymakers to defer blindly to the popular will, for the question still remained: Which popular will is speaking; is it man’s higher or his lower nature that is making itself heard? In practice, it usually will be a combination of both, but only in the former case would the will of the people deserve to be enacted into law in its raw, unrefined, unmediated form. Yet, in Wanniski’s model, politicians need not be concerned with such distinctions. The reason is that, in his view, the general interest is achieved not by transcending particularistic interests but by totaling them. For Wanniski, as for Jeremy Bentham, “the interest of the community” is merely the “sum of the interests of the several members who compose it.”\textsuperscript{28} The purpose of government, then, is not to enlist self-interested motives in the service of a more noble goal but simply to maximize the attainment of individual self-interest without reference to man’s ethical needs.

By eliminating from his model any universal principle of justice, Wanniski disposes of the problem of evil. The danger that so vexed the Framers— how to deal with the threat posed by unjust majorities— is defined out of existence. Since the purpose of government is simply to cater to the subjective “tastes” of the electorate— whether mean or noble by classical standards is irrelevant— the majority is always right. Thus, he declares,

no individual can possibly be as wise as the electorate, the consensus,
in discerning the preferred tastes of all individuals who compose the electorate. Can it be agreed that every individual who casts a ballot or abstains from voting does so after weighing his or her perceived interests against the available choices and the issues at stake? If so, then it is plain that the results of an election represent the best judgment of the body politic in accommodating the interests of its individual parts. Insofar as elections are honestly conducted, they always turn out right. . . . To put it even more emphatically, barring fraud, the winners of every election are superior to those who lose. Every referendum, every bond issue that goes to the voters turns out correctly. And in every national or local election, each and every citizen who is elected to the Presidency, the Congress, or City Hall is the optimum reflection of the national or local interest, given the choices available to the electorate.20

By accepting the Benthamite notion of the community interest, Wanniski also does away with the traditional conception of leadership. In older Western thought, the community was understood as not merely the aggregate of individuals living and voting at any given moment but rather as a corporate entity: in Burke's immortal phrase, as "a partnership between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born." 30 Walter Lippmann has noted that what binds a community together is its traditions. "But traditions," he adds,

are more than the culture of the arts and sciences. They are the public world to which our private worlds are joined. This continuum of public and private memories transcends all persons in their immediate and natural lives and it ties them all together. In it there is performed the mystery by which individuals are adopted and initiated into membership in the community.

The body which carries this mystery is the history of the community, and its central theme is the great deeds and the high purposes of the great predecessors. From them the new men descend and prove themselves by becoming participants in the unfinished story.31

Lippmann observes that it is by restraining his natural impulses in favor this higher standard that the individual becomes civilized. Irving Babbitt has taken this analysis a step further, noting that it is by embodying in their own character the higher principles that men qualify for leadership.32 It was precisely such men whom Madison had in mind in the passage already cited when he wrote of "a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country. . . ." 33

Wanniski abandons this concept. In place of leaders, respected by the body politic because they in turn have humbled themselves before a higher standard,34 he would install a corps of abject followers. The often-ridiculed politician with ear to the ground and finger to the wind becomes the ideal. "The electorate," he writes, "being wiser than any individual in the society, is society's most precious resource. It is the job of the politician to try to divine what it is the electorate wants." The only thing limiting the welfare of nation states, he adds, is "the capacity of . . . politicians and philosophers to understand the wisdom of people." 35

Part of the reason for Wanniski's supreme confidence in the "wisdom of the people" is that he expects less of government than did our forebears. Indeed, all he wants of the system is that the people as individuals communicate what they perceive to be in their personal self-interest and that the politicians, having received the majority's message, act on it with a minimum of slippage or delay. From neither the individual voter nor the interplay of governmental procedures as a whole does he expect any support for man's higher or ethical nature to emerge. Rather, he conceives of man's needs as having a purely subjective, non-ethical origin.

Yet even on his own terms it is not certain that Wanniski's faith in the electorate is fully warranted. A key assumption underlying his argument is that individuals always act rationally in political settings and that "this behavior is the same between individuals or aggregates of individuals," so that the "aggregate of all individuals is shown always to aim rationally at ultimate concord and unity . . . ." 36 Based on this assumption, Wanniski makes numerous assertions about political behavior. He maintains, e.g., that there is little danger that biased news reporting or political demagogy will have a negative impact. Another assertion is that the electorate will prefer peace to war. Still another is that it will place a high value on human rights.37

My objection is not that these assumptions are in every instance untrue. Obviously, many people are rational in the way suggested by Wanniski. But numerous theorists have pointed in recent years to the rise of the so-called "mass man": a creature cut off from the incentives, values, security, and sense of moral self-worth that can only come from membership in a true community. Far from the confident, strongly motivated individuals who form the basis for Wanniski's political model, these individuals have been described as lonely, bored, frightened of freedom, and a ready target for demagogues who will promise them security or a sense of purpose, no matter in how far-fetched or ruthless a cause. Often, such people prefer the dangers and deprivations of war to the relative ease and prosperity of peace-time, so great is their longing to be part of something bigger than themselves.

The cause of this phenomenon, as Nisbet has argued persuasively, is the progressive decline in significance of those groups that traditionally have lain intermediate to the individual and the vast nation state.38 It is the interpersonal relationships existing within such groups—including the extended family, the church, the guild, and the local community—which historically have given meaning and a sense of place to the individual. At the same time, the diversity of such groups has provided the array of cultural alternatives which alone make individual freedom within
society possible. But, with the growing centralization of power in the mass state, such groups have lost much of their functional significance, hence much of their emotional significance and authority as well. This has led to the increasing attachment of new emotional loyalties to and identification with the centralized state. The centralization of state power feeds upon itself, says Nisbet, and down this road lies the absolute political community and "democratic totalitarianism." 39

Federalism, constitutionalism, and the separation of powers serve as roadblocks to such centralizing tendencies. Instead of considering the people "as simply a numerical aggregate of individuals regarded for political and administrative purposes as discrete and socially separated," such a system regards "the people as indistinguishable from a culture, its members as inseparable from the families, unions, churches, professions, and traditions that actually compose a culture." 40 While direct, unmediated democracy leads to the dissolution of diversity in a sea of uniformity, constitutionalism, with its separation of powers, does just the opposite. It represents the people not as atomized, isolated individuals but as members of varied groups and autonomous associations possessing a multiplicity of competing and sometimes overlapping interests. The result, rather than to diminish these separate sources of loyalty and authority in society, is to strengthen and preserve them. And it is precisely this "multiplicity of interests," as Madison observed, that assures the security of civil rights in a free government.41

Wannisiki, it must be emphasized, is not overtly hostile to autonomous associations. In fact, he seems to favor them, seeing them as useful means by which rational individuals can communicate their wishes to the politicians. At the same time, he appears to be less than fully appreciative of the essential role these groups perform in the development of the individual personality. In this, he repeats the mistake of the founders of liberalism, who, as Nisbet observes, saw "such traits as sovereign reason, stability, security, and indestructible motivations toward freedom and order" 42 as inhering in the self-sufficing individual, and did not realize the extent to which such healthy psychological attributes were dependent on the existence of flourishing community relationships.43

Having underestimated the importance of intermediate institutions, Wanniski fails to give due weight to the kind of constitutional arrangements needed to assure their continued vitality. Thus, whether citizens vote directly on policy through referendums or indirectly through representative elections is a matter of relative indifference. So, too, is the question of federalism versus mass national voting. However elections are organized (providing only that they are honestly conducted), "they always turn out right."

In this seeming unconcern for the institutional prerequisites of a healthy pluralism, Wanniski—a supporter of relatively less government as a general proposition—comes close to the position of James MacGregor Burns, who, as we have seen, is an advocate of a more activist governmental role. In his critique of the Madisonian system Burns complains that it is based on "a pervading distrust of the people when organized in a national bloc or party. The people, yes—but only in their separated, federalized, localized capacities. Popular government, yes—but not really popular rule by hungry majorities." The "trouble with anti-majoritarianism," he continues,

"This sad state of affairs was entirely predictable. It is what happens when constitutional principles and the demands of the moral order upon which they are based are ignored or deliberately flouted."

is that it sees not the people but a caricature of the people. If a popular majority really did constitute a great glob of mindless, herdlike persons, with the instincts of a mob, we would do well to build barricades against them at every strategic point. But there is no such thing as a nation-wide mass or mob; the people are divided by endless social, attitudinal, economic, and . . . political differences. . . .43

Where Burns goes wrong is in assuming such pluralistic divisions are self-sustaining; that they are somehow embedded in man's instinctual nature and hence inevitable. In reality, they depend for their sustenance on certain existing institutional supports, many of which Burns would like to jettison. And though Burns is correct that the United States is today not a full-blown mass society, it is also true that—thanks in large measure to reforms of a plebiscitarian nature that have already taken place—we are well on our way to becoming one.

How far down this path we have already moved can be seen in the tendency to politicize most aspects of life and to regard as unimportant whatever cannot be justified as serving some immediate political purpose—a tendency evident to some degree even among those who are most cognizant of the dangers thus posed. More and more the only goal that matters is to effect quick results in the public-policy arena by mobilizing whatever means are available. Anything—and, more ominously, anybody—not readily usable as an instrument in the hot cause of the hour is reduced to the status of a cipher, to be ignored or destroyed as convenience dictates. It is this trend that Judge Robert Bork probably has in mind when he warns in his new book, The Tempting of America,44 that entire fields—including law, religion, science, literature, and journalism—are falling victim to the political temptation. "Professions and academic disciplines that once possessed a life and structure of their own," Bork writes, "have steadily succumbed, in some
cases almost entirely, to the belief that nothing matters beyond politically desirable results, however achieved."

This sad state of affairs was entirely predictable. It is what happens when constitutional principles and the demands of the moral order upon which they are based are ignored or deliberately flouted. Should present trends be allowed to continue unabated, the ensuing reality can only be displeasing to a Wanniski or Kemp, and—just possibly—to Professor Burns as well.

Notes
3. While this is not the most popular understanding of Jefferson's position, I believe it comes closest to the truth. For a more complete exposition of this view, see Claes G. Ryn, Democracy and the Ethical Life (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 183-87. An expanded paperback edition of this book, with two new chapters added, will be published by The Catholic University of America Press in January 1990.
9. Ibid., 21-22.
10. Ibid., 24-42 and 327-32.
11. Ibid., 40-41.
13. Ibid., 189.
16. Aside from its moral implications, such a stance would be extremely short-sighted: rightward trends have a way of turning into leftward trends, and vice versa.
18. The Federalist, No. 57, 370; No. 51, 341; No. 10, 59. Referring to this understanding that self-interest alone is an insufficient motivation upon which to build a self-governing republic, Irving Kristol has observed that the Founding Fathers "used such phrases as 'republican morality' or 'civic virtue,' but what they had constantly in mind was the willingness of the good democratic citizen, on critical occasions, to transcend the habitual pursuit of self-interest and devote himself directly and disinterestedly to the common good." In terms reminiscent of Irving Babbitt, he adds that self-government as an ideal to be respected "means the willingness of people to permit their baser selves to be directed by their better selves . . . ." See Kristol, On the Democratic Idea in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 3-6.
20. The Federalist, No. 10, 57 (emphasis in original).
21. Ibid., 337.
22. Ibid., 169.
24. The Federalist, No. 10, 57 (emphasis in original).
29. Wanniski, op. cit., 6 (emphasis in original).
33. The Federalist, No. 10, 59.
35. The Federalist, No. 10, 59.
38. Ibid., xii.
39. Ibid., 9, 13, 60-61.
41. Ibid., 283.
42. Ibid., 249.
43. The Federalist, No. 51, 339-40.
44. Nisbet, op. cit., 225.
45. Burns, op. cit., 334-35.