

VIEWS ON THE HISTORY, POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY
OF AMERICA

A story of the Greeks and the analogy it provides for us.

Of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides relates that the Athenian Greeks ceased to be a great and feared power in the Mediterranean when they fought and were defeated at equal numbers by the Greeks at Syracuse in Sicily. The reason they were defeated for the first time at equal numbers when hitherto they were usually victorious against heavy odds is that they fought a people for the first time who believed in the same principles they did. Their defeat demonstrated that their power was not unique or mysterious to themselves but rather lay in the fact that they were human beings who adhered to certain ideas and it was the resultant strength that men could bring to life by holding these principles that made them great.

The moral Thucydides drew from this was that other countries lost their fear of the "Athenian Greek Magic" by seeing them defeated. The analogy relative to America, in my opinion, is that Americans are human beings no better or worse as such than any other group of people on the planet but what lies at the greatness of America, and great I believe it to be, are the principles that we espouse and specifically that the people of this land believing in these concepts.

The analogy of the Greeks to our situation is that with the prolonged ideological conflict with Russia, there exists the tendency, even if not articulated, on the part of Americans to tone down the striking features of our principles, emphasize those characteristics which are less offensive to communists under the opinion that this would reduce tensions if the source of those tensions were not highlighted. While recognizing this to be the case, I advocate that we perceive that the following principles (the ones enumerated are ones that I am deeply committed to and when in the course of duty to country a man may die it is specifically in defense of these that I would undertake that duty):

- (a) Sanctity of the individual
- (b) Right to privacy
- (c) The doctrine that men are not the creatures of the state but rather that the state exists only to serve its citizens
- (d) That it derives its authority from God
- (e) That its citizens have the freedom to publicly worship God

make us great and that in time of danger, when we are challenged for holding them, that we should increase our devotion to them.

62 109100-1

My personal philosophy of life is that I am an individual created by Our Lord; that I am an American citizen who loves his country, is prepared to die in its defense, and believes in the right of that country to self-defense against enemies that would attack it.

As one human being, what can I do to promote its welfare -- while I do not pretend to perfectly comprehend, less perfectly act on these truths; I believe, in a generation which is rare for the profession of these qualities, in possessing a love and adoration of Our Lord for His own sake as a primary reason for living and motive for acting and on a more mundane level, of possessing a personal honor which will not sacrifice its principles for the acquisition of money or power. To be more truthful, for the above reasons, not to pursue these goals at all.

What explains a person who reads a great deal, does not extensively socialize, marry, have children, try to accept responsibility or strive for a better material well-being? I have read above 3,000 books. I enjoy being alone from the standpoint of thinking about what I read and spiritual meditation. I enjoy living in a country that respects my personal freedom and has faith in individual human beings -- faith that their efforts to be true to themselves and strengthen their integrity will in the long run benefit both the individual and society.

To achieve the above goals it does not inhere that a person has to remain single, be less social than average or place position or money low on a system of values, but I find this attitude to afford less room for compromise.

What do such attitudes mean in social terms? Can we have a viable society if each person does not contribute to his capacity for the Gross National Product? Yes, if we appreciate the fact that other courses are open and accept the fact that some people will take them. Why doesn't a person who feels this way go into a conventional role such as a teacher? Again, I feel it is exercising the capacity God gave and the freedoms our political system conferred to be an individual. If Lincoln had lived and died in Springfield, Illinois, never gaining any fame but still possessing his strong faith in God and integrity, I feel his life would still have meaning because his will acted on the graces Our Lord bestowed on him to develop his strong character.

The genius of America in history, and I am thinking here in political and natural terms, is that it professed the faith that any person could be capable of greatness if given the opportunity. Systems prior to this entrusted its opportunities and destiny on its Aristocracy and if exceptional persons rose from the common populace, it assimilated him into the favored class. Coming from the point of theoretically expressing faith in the average person with the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights in 1776, Abraham Lincoln afforded history an example of the truth of this belief.

Another feature of which I am proud to be an American would be the following example. In the Central Valley of California we do not have orientals blowing up gas stations as is occurring in Venezuela. The reason is that for someone who is poor opportunity to improve his status by personal initiative exists as a safety valve to frustration. This idea is cogent enough that it is the policy of our government to disseminate it to other lands as a means to deal with the social and political problems that have arisen in the 20th century.


Leo A. Gorman

6-3-64