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Short Notices

Freedom of Expression: Purpose as Limit. By Francis Canavan. (Durham, N.C., and Claremont, Calif.: Carolina Academic Press and The Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy, 1984. xv + 181 pp.: cloth, \$19.75; paper, \$9.95.)

WILL MORRISEY

“One of the most curious developments in recent intellectual history is the metamorphosis of freedom of speech and press into freedom of expression *tout court*.” Words are inseparable from reason—in principle if not in practice—and the substitution of *expression* for speech, oral and written, betokens the redefinition of ideas as tastes and tastes as urges. “Expression, in this understanding of it, becomes detached from rational purpose.” Canavan writes “to disturb [this] insufficiently reflective public opinion.”

The book’s first and finest chapter contains an uncommonly reasonable discussion of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Canavan reminds his readers that any freedom must have some purpose, and this purpose defines, that is, limits, the freedom served by it. For example, if, as the Supreme Court has consistently recognized, the First Amendment’s primary purpose “is to produce a government controlled by a public opinion that has been formed through free and rational debate on public issues,” then reasoned speech and pornography are not created equal. Amusingly enough, some of the more libertarian Justices, while professing to discover no Constitutionally valid distinction between *The Federalist Papers* and *Fanny Hill*, easily discern important differences between political speech and commercial advertising, the latter deemed legitimately ruled by strict laws. Canavan would end such arbitrary judicial expressions by redirecting attention to the distinction “not between speech and conduct but between irrational and more or less rational speech.”

In six of the remaining seven chapters, Canavan examines the teachings of nine noteworthy writers on freedom of speech: Milton, Locke, Spinoza, Wortman (a Jeffersonian democrat and author of *A Treatise Concerning Political Enquiry, and the Liberty of the Press*, published in 1800), Mill, Bagehot, Laski, and two twentieth-century American legal scholars, Zechariah Chafee, Jr. and Alexander Meiklejohn. Having insisted upon distinctions among kinds of expression, Canavan does not fail to acknowledge the sometimes considerable differences in intellect and learning among these men. (Almost necessarily, his reading of Locke’s complex writings will be more controversial than his treatment of Laski). Be that as it may, Canavan convincingly shows that liberty’s great and near-great defenders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries defended freedom of speech as an inducement to reason, not passion. Indeed,

Bagehot went so far as to argue that “government by discussion” would rechannel sexual into intellectual energy.

Canavan shows that this defense of free speech first weakened when Mill and his followers optimistically presumed that moral *progress* must result from liberty, and then began to collapse when such writers as Laski and Meiklejohn utterly abandoned the “appeal to Nature and Nature’s God” as progressivism’s optimism receded. “[T]o assert that truth is beyond the reach of reason is the constant temptation of contemporary liberals.” Canavan’s final chapter eloquently summarizes the argument:

Freedom to speak and publish was originally advocated for the services it would render to reason in the pursuit of truth. Now it is defended on the ground that, not only is there no definitive standard by which we may judge what is true, there is not even any standard by which we can distinguish reason in the pursuit of truth from passion in the pursuit of pleasure, or greed in quest of gain, or the *libido dominandi* in its drive for power. But to take this position is to undermine the whole case for the freedom of the mind and its expression in speech and publication.

Nihilism makes a poor shield for right.

One might ask if modern political philosophy bears nihilism within itself from the beginning, in contending that reason is a scout for the passions. Modernity’s ‘rationalism’ may attempt more to make reality than to apprehend it. This question takes one beyond Canavan’s study, which carefully leads us to it, thus providing a cogent introduction to the issues raised by the modern right to freedom of speech.

Philosophical Apprenticeships. By Hans-Georg Gadamer. Trans. Robert R. Sullivan. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985. 205 pp.: \$17.50.)

JOAN STAMBAUGH

The title of this intellectual autobiography should remind us of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeships*. It is not an *autobiography* in the usual sense, but primarily makes accessible to the reader the entire university atmosphere of twentieth century Germany, including the devastating effects of Nazism and the recovery therefrom. The book’s motto, *de nobis ipsis silemus*, incorporates the author’s characteristic hermeneutical stance of not focusing on himself in a self-reflective Cartesian fashion, but of providing the sensitive optic for the personages and situations with which he came in contact.

There are separate chapters on Paul Natorp, Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, Rudolf Bultmann, Gerhard Krüger, Richard Kroner, Hans Lipps, Karl Reinhardt, Karl Jaspers, and Karl Löwith; but many other figures, some perhaps less known to English readers but equally important for Gadamer, are discussed in an ingenuous and revealing way. Gadamer leads us through the university