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The Tenth  
Sol Feinstone Lecture

THE  
MEANING OF FREEDOM

*by*

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The United States Military Academy is pleased to sponsor an annual lecture series on the Meaning of Freedom. It is significant that this lecture program has been made possible by the generosity of the late Mr. Sol Feinstone, a dedicated American patriot whose commitment to the ideals of the American Revolution led him to devote many years of effort, as well as considerable personal resources, to the collection of important letters, manuscripts, and books dealing with our heritage of freedom. His donation of these items to libraries and educational institutions insures that the message which they proclaim will be preserved and transmitted to future generations of Americans.

Mr. Feinstone's abiding faith in a brotherhood of free nations of men has found further expression in several lecture series which he has endowed in order to permit prominent Americans to interpret The Meaning of Freedom.

The U. S. Corps of Cadets and the staff and faculty of the Military Academy are pleased to recognize the generosity and loyalty of this great American for providing a living endowment in the defense of freedom.

## THE MEANING OF FREEDOM\*

Thank you. Thank you very much. It is a great privilege and an honor and pleasure at all times to come to West Point and especially to be the Sol Feinstone Lecturer. I know I have been preceded to this lectern by many distinguished Americans, and it's a challenge to live up to the standards that they have hitherto set. It's also, of course, very flattering to see so many people turn out when you could be home watching the American League playoffs. I was told not to feel bad. I was elated that so many people chose to come here tonight and was told that a few of you had to come, but they said only the ones in the white shirts with the short hair.

It is a fact that I have had essentially two careers. My current profession is as a journalist, commenting on the day's news. My training is as a political philosopher. Tonight I want to try, with your indulgence, to join these two; to give you a brief tour of the political climate of this country in the 1980's; and then to say what I think is alarming about it and why I think it derives from a difficult, ambiguous, and perhaps wrong idea of freedom — a four centuries old error now, that represents a kind of wrong-turning in the American, and indeed, the Western, tradition of political philosophy. Which is to say, I'm going to be mildly depressing tonight. That's all right; I subscribe to the Ohio-in-1895 theory of history, so named by me for the little known fact that in Ohio in 1895 there were just two automobiles, and they collided.

I have a strong sense that things go wrong; that America, because of certain wrong ideas about freedom and the political order and what we owe to our society, is increasingly at the mercy of hostile forces and increasingly finding it difficult to defend itself. I believe that we have for too long subscribed to the belief that freedom is the absence of restraints imposed by others. And I believe that a natural corollary to that erroneous belief is the erroneous belief that government exists simply to facilitate, to the maximum extent possible, the unrestrained enjoyment of private appetites. This is a political philosophy flowing directly from a concept of freedom that I take to be, in the long run, disastrous; and to the extent that our country is founded on it, our country is ill-founded. I shall come to that gloomy conclusion, and perhaps an optimistic coda, in the fullness of time.

Let me begin by telling you where we are and then trying to relate where we are, in our political and economic argument, to what, indeed, I take to be the philosophic roots of it.

The place to begin to understand the political climate of the 1980's

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is with the only recent political bench mark, which is the 1980 election. The Republicans, after they won that election, set about doing what the winner of every election does systematically and aggressively, which is to misconstrue the results, to wring from the results an alleged mandate to do precisely what the person winning wanted to do anyway. In this case, it was to say that the 1980 election was that most unusual of American experiences: a positive, forward-looking affirmation of the winner's political philosophy. I see no evidence in any of the election analysis to confirm that. It seems to me reasonably clear that it was a classic, normal American election, which is to say, someone lost it not someone won it; that indeed, the 1980 election was a repudiation of the predecessor. And indeed, if you look at the results, it wasn't as astonishing as most people thought. It was the case, I believe, that the President's margin of victory, although substantial, was only the ninth largest margin of victory in this century; and, although the Republicans won substantial Senate gains (ten, eleven seats), Democratic candidates to the Senate won more votes in 1980, because, while Republicans were winning small victories in small states, Glenn in Ohio and Cranston in California, for example, were winning tremendous victories for the Democratic Party.

My point is simply that the mood of the American people was divided and remains divided today. And it is in this division that we see the root of the structural, systemic, political problems in this country, a problem in defining and, because of the problem in defining, a problem in defending freedom.

In the last eighteen months, we have seen the divisions in the American mind writ large. We have, I think, learned three important lessons. The first lesson we have learned is that the American people talk a very different, you might say a very much more conservative, game than they are prepared to have their government play. The second lesson is that the American middle class, the broad mass of the country, which is the articulate, organized, intense complainer about big government, is incomparably the biggest beneficiary of big government and is determined to use all its wiles and guiles to remain so. And the third, and most amusing to some and alarming to others, lesson of the last eighteen months is that the conservative agenda for the United States costs more money than the liberal agenda.

Let me go over these very briefly to set the stage for how we got to this peculiar argument about our politics.

When Ronald Reagan won the Presidency, people said that put the end to an era. Ronald Reagan was going to melt, or so the theory was, the iron triangles that have dominated our politics in Washington, for these many years. By iron triangles is meant the three-sided

relationship that exists between the congressional committee that authorizes a particular program, the executive bureaucracy that administers that program, and the client group in the country that benefits from it. There are ten thousand iron triangles in this interest group-brokered liberalism we practice in Washington.

It is, indeed, the nature of our politics, of our political philosophy, to justify organizing in private groups to bend public power to private purposes. I have often said that if you want to understand the American government, do not read the Constitution; that has precious little to do with it. Read instead the Washington telephone directory and especially those pages that carry the listings, "National Association of . . ." There you will find some of the twenty-two hundred trade associations and other lobbies that are, after government and then publishing in all its forms, the third largest employer group in Washington. You know the big ones: the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Association of Broadcasters. You may not have heard of the National Crushed Stone Association, or the National Ice Association, or the National Truck Stop Operators Association. Every interest group, every economic group in the country, is organized to bend the public power to its purposes.

And, indeed, why not? Listen as we go through this election year. There is one word you will hear over and over again: "responsive". Candidate after candidate pledges that he or she will be a "responsive" officeholder. It is my thesis that what ails our government is: that it is "responsive" to a fault; it has a hair trigger to every organized and intense interest group; that our government is big but not strong. It does not have the internal strength to say, "No."

A few years ago, Burger King used to run an ad, and it used to say that Burger King's claim to fame was that at Burger King, unlike at McDonald's, they would take the pickle off your hamburger if you didn't want it. And they had a jingle that said, "Hold the pickle, hold the lettuce. Special orders don't upset us. You get it your way at Burger King." Government is a giant Burger King. Everyone comes to place their order and, to the extent possible, the brokered government simply delivers favors.

This is not, by the way, a partisan observation. The Republicans are just as guilty as the Democrats. Indeed, the clearest example of this degradation of the democratic dogma, this purely responsive government, is the doctrine of democracy that leaves no room for leadership. Leadership, after all, has been called the ability to inflict pain and get away with it (hopefully, short-term pain for long-term gain). But leadership is getting people to do something they'd rather not do at the moment. It surely is the job of government to

have a longer time-horizon than the average individual has, to get people to look to the future and provide for the national strength.

I remember when Gerry Ford first became President, he gave a press conference at which he was asked if he favored a stiff tax on a gallon of gasoline as a form of price rationing to dampen demand. His answer was, and it was exactly this, "Today I saw a poll that shows that eighty-one percent of American people do not want to pay more for a gallon of gasoline. Therefore," said the President, "I am on solid ground in opposing it." Well, all ground seems solid when your ear is to it; and, as Churchill said, "It is very difficult to look up to someone in that position."

But it is increasingly the philosophic position of the democracies that democracy exists to do nothing more than read the latest polls and act accordingly.

Well, how do you do that if you're looking at the divided opinion of the American electorate today, the American people who complain bitterly about big government? The American electorate is comprised of people, one in seven of whom is a Social Security recipient, Social Security being incomparably the biggest component of big government, and incomparably the most sacrosanct. One in six Americans who work off the farm works for government. And forty-eight or forty-nine percent of America's families this year will receive some form or other of transfer payment from the government about which they merrily complain, the day long.

The President says we must get government off the backs of the American people. Who does he think put it there? It was put there by legislators, elected and re-elected. The Congress of the United States passed three thousand five hundred laws in the decade of the seventies. That's nearly one law a day, seven days a week for ten years. Couldn't happen, of course, if Congress had a simple rule that said you cannot vote for a bill you have not read. But the state legislatures, which are ostensibly more responsive to the real desire of the American public, are worse. The state legislature of this state passed nine thousand five hundred laws in one decade. The fifty state legislatures combined passed a quarter of a million.

They are not doing this because the legislators, who are professional politicians, get up in the morning and say, "How today can I be obnoxious to my voters?" They are doing this because the American people have a voracious appetite for public services. They have a negligible willingness to pay for them, which accounts for our inflationary bias. Indeed, today's conservatism is, in many cases, the

prayerful belief that it is time to cut my neighbor's subsidy. That's not mine.

And, of course, the great American middle class is the great beneficiary of this, not surprisingly. And demographic numbers tell: most Americans are in the middle class; most benefits go to the middle class. Which is why, once Congress got done last year, after cutting means-tested welfare programs, the will to cut further evaporated.

Finally, we come to the most alarming note of all for conservatives, which is that their agenda for the country costs more than the liberal agenda, because it begins by accepting ninety-five percent of the liberal agenda: most of Social Security, most of Medicare, Medicaid, Food Stamps. The argument we've been having with such great fanfare and rolling of drums in Washington is about the very margins of the modern welfare state.

Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party were perceived as accepting the basic American consensus for the welfare state, a consensus that has been growing steadily since 1932. For fifty years now the American government has grown at a constant pace in a constant direction under both parties. If Ronald Reagan and the Republicans were *not* seen as accepting this, Reagan would have lost, not won, forty-four states. And on top of this, the Republicans add, or try to add (and the question is very much open), 1.5 trillion dollars for national defense, eight billion dollars for new prisons, a five billion dollar revenue loss for tuition tax-credit. As Everett Dirksen once said, "A billion here, a billion there, it adds up to real money." And it is adding up very fast.

And what we see in the United States today is a kind of despair, a kind of cultural and political despair about the inability of the American people to, on the one hand, cut the demands they make on government or, on the other hand, to pay the taxes necessary to pay the bills for the services they manifestly demand politically.

Where then does this leave us? It leaves us in a crisis. We, like all other Western, developed industrial democracies, have built an enormous welfare state. We have come to a consensus, which I think is by and large correct, that it is humane and, in many cases, efficient to purchase a number of things collectively: some pensions, some medical care, some housing. In the great post-war period of economic growth, our economy was strong, and the going was easy, and the growth came fast, and the gusher of revenues to the government at constant tax rates made building a welfare state effortless; in that great twenty-five year period between roughly 1948, the beginning of the Marshall Plan, and 1973, the revolution and energy crisis and the slowdown of growth throughout the industrial world, we made a whole series of

promises to ourselves: promises of entitlements that constitute claims on the future wealth of this country; promises made on the assumption that the economic growth of those twenty-five years was the norm for the foreseeable future. An economic growth we have not seen since and do not know today how to restore.

And so, as we enter the middle 1980's, the American political system is asked to do something it has no experience doing, something that no one went into politics to do, no one knows how to do, and no one wants to learn. And that is to break promises or to raise taxes, to break promises or to impose pain and get away with it. We have a uniquely difficult time now in the 1980's, when we are being asked to think collectively, not to think as individuals, not to think as isolated, self-interested people, but to think as citizens, as we have in the past rarely been required to do. As a reading of those pages in the Washington telephone directory will tell you, we are not often required to do.

Generally, Americans are related to their government as individual or organized claimants. Now we are being asked to think about giving back or enduring pains.

How, I ask you, did we get to this point? Well, I think I know, and I think it requires a kind of long run-up. But let me just say one more thing to illustrate the divided mind of the American people today.

The peculiarity of politics as we enter the middle of this decade is as follows: rarely in America is there such a clear consensus for one overriding public goal. That goal is a balanced budget. The goal is clear, there is no intellectual mystery about how to do it.

I could balance the budget tonight, and as a matter of fact, as a public service, I'll now do it. If you want to balance the budget, do the following four things: end the deductibility for tax purposes of mortgage interest payments; tax entitlement programs as income; lower the indexing of entitlement programs; and tax employer-paid health insurance as compensation. Right there you have more than balanced the budget. There are at any given time in Washington only five hundred and thirty-seven people there because they were elected; and if we did those four things, we would end the careers of five hundred and thirty-seven politicians. Because, deeply though the American people clamor for a balanced budget, they will reject every one of the four measures I just suggested that together would bring about what they say they desire. Because, again, the American people have for fifty years now had a government devoted to inflaming appetite and facilitating consumption to the point at which we have a deeply underfunded economy. Because, naturally, consuming too much, we save too little. Having lost the habit of deferring gratifica-

tions, we have lost the habit of thrift and investment. The American people today are saving five percent of their disposable income — approximately half of what the Germans are saving, approximately a third of what the Japanese are saving. We have been living for a long time off the seed corn of our future, and now we are beginning to pay for it.

How did we become an improvident people? The answer I think, as the answer to all great questions of human life, is an idea. History is the history of the human mind. And our problem is deeply rooted in a doctrine of what government is for, and that doctrine derives from a concept of freedom that I think is mistaken.

We have today a government that is, as few governments ever have been, omnipresent and omniprovident. And as the government has become more and more solicitous, it has become less and less respected — a great paradox of modern life. Never has government tried harder to do more; never has it been less respected.

And in this regard, conservatives have talked themselves into a terrible dilemma. On the one hand, they preach the doctrine that the government is too clumsy and too stupid, too venal, and too poorly motivated to do anything much to help, say, Cleveland. And the next moment, the conservatives turn around and say to the country, "Give us 1.5 trillion for national defense and give us your young men and women." Now a government that is too incompetent to help Cleveland cannot make those kinds of claims on the American people.

How did we get to this incoherence about the point of government? Well, as I say, it is in the history of our political philosophy that we must seek the answer. The history of Western political philosophy divides, not absolutely neatly but reasonably neatly, into two periods: the ancient and the modern period—the modern period beginning and turning really with Machiavelli and Hobbes. And between the ancient and the modern doctrines, one thing stands out: and that is a different definition of natural right and of freedom.

To the ancient, the idea of freedom was this: A person is free when he lives as human beings are supposed to live, when he lives as is appropriate for this kind of creature, when he lives in the way that is by nature right. There were certain patterns of noble behavior. And it was the duty of government, as ancients understood it, to so draw the laws to shape the citizens, so that they could, in the end, be worthy of the good society. The basic doctrine of ancient political philosophy was that men and women are biological facts. But ladies and gentlemen suited for free government are social artifacts, creatures of the law—difficult to bring about.

This was the controlling doctrine of Western political philosophy from its inception in Plato to the Renaissance. It obviously is a doctrine of politics as a branch of education. Indeed, the book that launched Western political philosophy, Plato's *Republic*, is a book about education.

And then, with Machiavelli and Hobbes, something changed. Machiavelli lived in the tumult, the constant, angry civil strife of Italy, populated by warring city-states. Hobbes lived in the decay of Tudor institutions in England, a civil war looming and sometimes raging. To these two men, the political problem was different. It was order. "Stop being so ambitious," they said. "Don't try to make men more noble. Look at them square and look at them whole. Take them as they are and make them behave. That is the only political problem. Do not, repeat, do not try to improve them. Indeed, if you look at man," they said, "he is a simple, not very noble, creature." But the very simplicity of man—the fact that, if left as he is, mankind is under the sway of a few simple strong passions—makes him very easy to control. Hobbes said man is under the sovereign mastery of pain and pleasure. He's afraid of death, and he desires fame and security. Fine. Give him that, and he will behave. Others said people are inherently self-interested: "Give them a commercial country. Subsume all human passions in getting and giving and gaining. We shall have a commercial republic in which all the energies that have hitherto made political societies tumultuous will be channeled into commerce. It's not noble. It's not pretty, but it solves the political problem. After all," they said, "natural right is not living as it is naturally appropriate for man. Natural right shall henceforth be defined as a right to those things which our strongest passions incline us toward."

Generally, it was the revolution of self-interestedness. Mankind must be viewed as a self-interested animal, not attractive, not noble, but manageable. And so we got the modern political philosophy. And so we come to the founding of the first modern nation, the first militantly, proudly, self-consciously modern nation, the United States.

And we come to the revolution in democratic theory, wrought by what I think to be the most creative political philosopher we have produced, James Madison. Before the United States, all political philosophers had agreed about one thing. *If* democracy is possible, it is only possible in a small, face-to-face society: Pericles' Athens or Rousseau's Geneva. Because when you have a large society, you have factions, and factions are the enemy of democracy. Madison took that theory, turned it on its head, and turned it inside out. He said, "Not true; the more factions the better." Madison said we must have an extensive republic.

You can give the American the Founding Father's political philosophy in a kind of catechism: What is the great problem in politics? The answer is tyranny. To what tyranny is a democracy prey? The tyranny of the majority. How do you prevent that? By not having any majorities. By having only minorities. So that any majority at any given time will just be a shifting, unstable coalition of minorities, constantly changing kaleidoscopically.

Therefore, we must expand the country, not a small democracy, a huge one, a continental democracy. Did you ever think how peculiar it is that when the Founding Fathers met in Philadelphia, this was a country of three million free souls? Eighty percent of them lived within twenty miles of tidewater, strung out along this unexplored fringe of a continent. And what did they call the congress that they met in in Philadelphia? They called it the Continental Congress. That is *chutzpah*.

They called it that because they knew where they were going. Roughly, they were going to California, but basically, where they were going was west. They were going to have a huge democracy filled with factions. Because that way, you would avoid a tyrannical majority.

And so it came to pass that James Madison said, in what I take to be the two great documents of American political thought – *Federalist Papers Ten* and *Fifty-One*: in *Federalist Ten*, he said we must have the saving multiplicity of factions. And in *Federalist Fifty-One*, in a sentence I would have you write down and pin on your shaving mirror and memorize, he said, "We see throughout our system the process of supplying, by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives."

This was a country founded, to a remarkable and, I increasingly find, alarming extent, on the expectation that no one would operate from public-spirited motives. Everyone would operate from factional motives. But, because there would be so many factions pursuing their self-interest, the government restricted to simply an umpire's role keeping the competition and the factionalism peaceful, there would be no tyrannical majority.

Well, I think it works. If all the country has to worry about is the absence of a tyrannical domestic majority, then it works. And at that point when we were surrounded by unpassable oceans, months away from Europe, instead of fifteen minutes away from Moscow by missile, that might have been an adequate philosophy of freedom and an adequate conception of government. It is, I suggest, no longer. Because what we have is the need, increasingly, to have better motives.

It's perfectly understandable why the eighteenth century fell for this particular doctrine of philosophy. The eighteenth century discovered astronomy. The eighteenth century, in a sense, discovered modern physics, and fell in love with both subjects. The heavens at that time looked like a marvelous clockwork of orderly planets. We now know from better telescopes and other instruments that there is a lot of wobbling and banging about among the planets, and it's not so tidy as it appears. But it looked as though the universe itself was run by a benevolent clockmaker-god, and that the principle could be applied to politics.

Hence, the doctrine of separation of powers. Hence, the checks and balances system of the American government. Rival institutions with rival interests would be held in equipoise, just like the solar system. Everyone acting self-interestedly but holding one another apart in preempting tyranny.

And so we came, in this country, to define the public interest as whatever results from this maelstrom of private interests. You stir it up, and whatever happens, that result shall be called, by semantic fiat, "the public interest." This is sort of the Cuisinart theory of government. You just stir things up and out comes a kind of puree, and you say, "Whatever comes out, that is the public interest."

Well, it's not that simple. It's not that effortless. And it leaves us, as I say, with a doctrine of merely responsive government. And, if I am right in my definition of leadership as the ability to inflict pain and get away with it, it leaves you technically disarmed. It leaves you unable to have even a doctrine of, let alone the fact of, leadership.

It leaves us with a country, built into its philosophy, with enormous disintegrative forces. It leaves us with those pages in the Washington telephone directory. It leaves us with brokered government. It leaves us, as a society, given over to the satisfaction of instant demands. It gives us a society incapable of deferring gratifications. It leaves us with, for that reason, an economy perennially underinvesting, an economy of declining productivity, an economy therefore consuming more money than it is generating in revenues, and an economy about to produce, in the middle of this decade, a serious turning, I believe, on the defense budget. (I thought that would get your attention.)

I think it will, because, when a country is asked to pay for its national security, it is being asked to look to the future. It is being asked to defer gratifications. It is being asked to think collectively. And we have no habit of that, we have no history of that, and we decreasingly have an ability to do that, because we have no public philosophy that tells us to do that.

After all, we are a country in which we see, throughout our system, a process of supplying, by opposite and rival interests, a "defect of better motives." And we are in a decade when, preeminently, we need good motives.

Well, what then, are we to do about it? It seems to me clear that, in order to defend freedom in the mid-twentieth century and in the late-twentieth century, we need to define it correctly. We need to go back from whence we came. We need to go back to Greece and Rome. We need to go back to the understanding that freedom is not just the absence of restraints imposed by others. Someone operating outside the absence of restraints can be governed by passion, can be enslaved by appetite.

Listen to the words. They are more than metaphors. They are the language of politics: "governed" by passions, "enslaved" by appetite. That is not a careless metaphor. We are not free when we are unable, either individually or collectively, to control our passionate, appetitive side.

And, to that end—the redefining of freedom—I suggest there is a place to turn. As I say, it is at the beginning. If you've taken a wrong turn early in the road, you wind up very far from where you want to be, and you go back to the fork in the road. I would suggest we go back to Socrates. I trust you have all recently reread *The Crita*, one of *The Dialogues*. It is the point at which Socrates is about to die. He has been sentenced to death by Athens for corrupting the youth. Whether or not he did, I shall not dwell upon. He was duly tried and sentenced, and some of his friends came to him and said, "We will help you escape; it's an unjust trial, unjust law. You're innocent. We will get you out. You will not have to drink the hemlock and die." And Socrates said, "No, I shall not leave. Because I would be being untrue to my parents. Because," he said, "the laws of Athens are my parents. They shaped my parents who made me. They brought my parents together in matrimony, they sustain the family, they sustain life. The laws of the community make us. We do not make the community." Look at the metaphor we have replaced this with.

That's Socrates' view of the world. What is ours? Ours is captured in the idea of a social contract. That is the fiction behind modern politics: that we came together one day as a people and decided it served our individual interests to contract to set up a society. It's quite historically preposterous, but it was an analytic metaphor expressing the doctrine of modern politics. It's all self-interest.

Well, now I ask you to justify conscription. I ask you to justify having an army to defend a social contract. Because no one risks his or

her life to defend a contract that he or she entered into voluntarily simply for convenience. If all our institutions and all our laws represent nothing more than the momentary calculation of convenience by disparate, self-interested individuals, then they are not only undefended, they are, in a way, indefensible.

We need a longer view of the social order. We need what the Greeks had, what Socrates had, what Western political philosophy had until we turned wrongly about four hundred years ago. We need a sense that we are bound and obligated to our society because we are not free without laws. We are not free without the restraints imposed on us by the law. We are not free, we are unformed. We are governed by appetite and enslaved by passion until we become not just men and women, but ladies and gentlemen; not just biological facts, but social artifacts.

Now we have a model for this in the United States. It was the model provided by Abraham Lincoln in a famous (no, not famous enough--I'll make it more famous) story. Lincoln took on the great topic of freedom, which is: To what extent is the law of a community legitimately concerned with the inner life of man? The reason we had a civil war is this (I can reduce it to one episode):

Lincoln was debating Stephen Douglas for a Senate seat in 1858 in Illinois. Lincoln, of course, lost. (Shows you the power of being right, doesn't it?) Douglas, at one point, said, "What we should do about the question of slavery in the territories (whether or not Kansas and Nebraska should be free states or slave territory): we should let them vote. Put it to the test. Let them decide what it is in their interest to do." And Lincoln said, "No, there are limits." He said, "There are limits to the sway of self-interest." He said, "Stephen Douglas is preaching the doctrine that there is no test of right or wrong but self-interest."

And on that issue, this republic nearly foundered in the middle of the last century. And on the subject of the primacy of the absolute sway of the doctrine of self-interest, it can again be threatened and can come close to and, indeed, can founder.

Lincoln told a story at approximately the same time, in a speech in Wisconsin to the state fair. He said there was an oriental despot who summoned together his wise men and challenged them to invent a sentence to be carved in stone to be forever in view and to be always true. And the wise men went away and came back after a while and said, "We've got the sentence." And it was: "This, too, shall pass away." And Lincoln, on the eve of the Civil War, when it was very possible the American experiment in democracy would pass away (let us hope this is not true now), said, "If we attend not only to the cultivation of the physical world around us, but of the moral world within us,

we can endure." And it was, to adopt another phrase of his, the duty of government not just to minister to self-interestedness, but to summon, as he said, "the better angels of our nature."

It is the purpose of government not just to tantalize self-interest, but to call people above it. This was an echo, in our sixteenth president, of the ancient political philosophy and the ancient political vision that I think we need to recur to. And that, I think, is the challenge of everyone in the United States who understands that leadership is about sacrifice.

It is my privilege tonight at this podium to be seeing in front of me a sea of future leaders who by definition have gone into the business of helping people in the business of deferring gratifications, of taking of a hard path. And that is why I come here: because it is not just a privilege for me; it is an intense relief to leave Washington for a scene such as this.

But to that end, let me say: obviously, the good society is a society that allows an enormous range of private freedom. I'm not questioning that. Obviously, a good society has an enormous sphere where we are not told what to do. But that sphere must be restricted. This is not a popular message. And I know how to make all the arguments. It is said, for example, that the sale of pornography should be a private transaction; the law should treat that as a private transaction between an individual buyer and an individual seller. The law can treat it as a private-interested transaction, but the law cannot make the results, which include Times Square and a billion dollar pornography industry, . . . you cannot make that a private phenomenon. That's public. That has to do with the quality of our lives.

I am not taking a stand on the subject of abortions. It is an issue on which honorable men and women of good will disagree. The law can treat an abortion as a private transaction between an individual and her doctor. The law can treat it that way, but nothing can make 1.7 million abortions a year a private phenomenon. That's a public phenomenon that has to do with the way we live, the way we treat sexuality, and life, and relations between the sexes—all of this.

We are, like it or not, involved in our laws, in shaping the inner lives of ourselves. Statecraft is, inevitably, soulcraft. The question is whether it will be good soulcraft or bad soulcraft. My point is, that I have made at, I'm afraid, extravagant length, that the doctrine of self-interestedness is a self-fulfilling description. Describe people as purely self-interested, and, sooner or later, you get people capable of nothing higher.

And to that end, we need to recur, as Lincoln did, to a grander rhetoric, to the politics of exhorting people, and indeed, to laws — prescription being, I believe, one of them — that stipulate and embody the

principle that we, like Socrates, are the creatures of our laws, and, as they give us life and character and freedom and restraints and virtues, so too we have a debt to pay back.

And that is why I am glad to have been able to come here and present the case for an alternative view of freedom to those to whom it will fall the duty of defending such freedoms as we have. It is our job in Washington and elsewhere to make the freedom that you defend worth defending.

## ABOUT THE SPEAKER . . .

George F. Will, generally regarded as the most intellectually substantial of the conservative columnists, probes below the surface of political issues for their broad philosophical significance. He began his *Washington Post* column, currently appearing in over three hundred newspapers, in 1972, and three years later started his biweekly column to *Newsweek* magazine.

In naming Will one of America's two hundred young leaders in 1974, *Time* magazine reported that "almost overnight his perceptive political commentary made him a leader of conservative opinion." In 1974 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary. The judges noted that he "is at home with a wide range of topics from international relations, campaigns and urban problems to the history of machine guns and the vagaries of the press."

In 1978 he published *The Pursuit of Happiness and Other Sobering Thoughts*. A second collection of his columns, entitled *The Pursuit of Virtue and Other Tory Notions*, was published in the spring of 1982.

Since 1974 Will has appeared on public television on "Agronsky and Company," a news discussion program presided over by Martin Agronsky. In 1980 the American Broadcasting Company hired him as an outside commentator for its coverage of both the Democratic and Republican conventions. He presently appears on the ABC television program, "This Week with David Brinkley."

George F. Will's lucidity, grace of style, and intellectual depth mark him as a distinguished and entertaining speaker for the Sol Feinstone Lecture series.



## SOL FEINSTONE'S CREDO

### DEDICATED TO

*The Judeo-Christian commitment of self-sacrifice for peace on earth, and the brotherhood of free nations of free men;*

*The Spirit of '76, a struggle of free men to remain free;*

*The immigrants who came after the revolution and helped build our country in freedom;*

*The underprivileged of all races who, by uplifting themselves, will raise all mankind to a higher humanity.*

### MY DEFINITION OF FREEDOM

*In the beginning there was the void of sameness; the spark of life made everything different.*

*The stamp of sameness is the stamp of death.*

*Freedom to me means a social order based on individual freedom to live differently and to dream differently. I dream of a Brotherhood of Free Nations of Free Men.*

Sol Feinstone