cratic Western attack on totalitarianism." While he does not specify this rather lame indictment, it does imply that, after the collapse of National Socialism, the Soviet regime is the worst totalitarian system functioning today.

Thus he disregards his own premises when he reaches the conclusion that I wrote the wrong book. And he does not improve his position when he supports this conclusion by referring to my account of the genesis of *Oriental Despotism*. Any reader who takes the trouble to open the book will find that the development of my ideas is discussed, not in the Acknowledgments, as he says, but in the Introduction, where I tell in some detail that I began my study of Chinese and Asiatic society a full decade before Hitler seized power and that this subject remained my central interest for more than a quarter of a century.

Luck had it that at a certain point in my inquiry my experiences with National Socialism deepened my insight into such phenomena as total terror, total submission, and total loneliness. Luck had it that my growing awareness of Russia's Orientally despotic past led me to see Russian—and eventually Chinese—Communism in a new light. In my study I suggest that clarification of the earlier forms of total power will facilitate the comparative analysis of all forms of modern totalitarianism, and I deplore that, in this respect, Italian and German Fascism have not been given sufficient attention. If my efforts help us to analyze and develop our great heritage of human freedom, and if they help us to understand and combat more effectively the total negation of freedom, then I will gladly bear Toynbee's wrath. He calls my book a "menace." A menace to what? To the worst form of total power? I hope it is.

KARL A. WITTFOGEL

*Chinese History Project,*
*Law Memorial Library, New York*

**COMMENT ON McCLOSKY'S CONSERVATISM AND PERSONALITY**

McClosky’s procedure as I understand it, comprises the following steps: (1) Compile, by reference to that on which there is “astonishing agreement among the disciples, and among disinterested scholars as well,” a list of the “characteristic . . . if not quintessential elements of the conservative outlook.” (2) Take note of, and deplore (via the adverb “unfortunately”), the fact that “some of the points . . . are . . . distinguished more for their rhetoric than for the clarity and crispness of their content.” (3) Break down the “creed” so arrived at into 43 items, most of them “fairly [!] straightforward statements of the conservative beliefs just discussed.” (4) Submit the 43 items to a “large general sample of persons in the vicinity of the Twin Cities,” asking them to agree or disagree with the items. (5) Analyze the responses, with a view to identifying the items that “[cluster] sufficiently to convince us that they [belong] to the same universe,” and so derive “scales” made up of items that in fact measure “some degree of the same attitude dimension.” (This, it appears, took two years of what at least sounds like very hard work.) (6) Satisfy your-
self that the twelve-item scale you end up with is a "tighter," more "refined," scale, with "greater internal consistency," than that "found in the original 43-item pool." (7) Submit the new scale to an "advanced senior-graduate class in political theory"; and accept the fact that 44 of 48 members in the class describe the "sentiments expressed" as "conservative" or "traditionalist" as significant "validation" of the items (that is, as evidence that it is really "conservatism" you are soon going to be measuring); as further validation, appeal en passant to the scale's "face validity" (note, that is to say, that the "items it includes express on their face the values that most knowledgeable people would designate as conservative [italics added]"). (8) Submit the items at different times to two "entirely different samples of the population." (9) Divide the respondents into four categories, "Extreme Conservatives," "Moderate Conservatives," "Moderate Liberals," "Liberals [not, let us notice, Extreme Liberals, as we would expect for purposes of symmetry]," according to the quartile in which their scores (on the items) fall. (10) Take note of differences among the respondents in Education, Awareness, Intellectuality, and recognize (as, these being the findings, you are clearly called upon to do) that "conservative beliefs are found most frequently among the uninformed, the poorly educated, and, so far as we can determine, the less intelligent." (Explain, however, that you don't mean for a moment that "all conservatives are uninformed, [or] ... all liberals knowledgeable, [or that] ... all the unlearned are conservative," but merely that "the most articulate and informed classes in our society are preponderantly liberal in their outlook.") (11) Break the respondents down again, according to their scores on "social personality traits," such as submissiveness, excessive feelings of guilt, etc., noting incidentally that one end of each of your trait scales is "desirable" (no need to say to whom), the other "undesirable"; again accept that which the data fairly force upon you: "conservatism, in our society at least, appears to be far more characteristic of social isolates, of people who think poorly of themselves, who suffer personal disgruntlement and frustration, who are submissive, timid, and wanting in confidence, etc." (12) Break down the respondents once more, this time according to their "clinical" personality traits, and again yield to the unavoidable conclusion: "the extreme conservatives are easily the most hostile and suspicious, the most rigid and compulsive, the quickest to condemn others for their imperfections and weaknesses, the most intolerant, ... the most inflexible and unyielding in their perceptions and judgments ... [They] apparently set far less store upon rigor or precision of thought. . . ."

I propose here to challenge neither the "objectivity" of all this (that is, the researchers' indifference, in "setting up" the project, to the conclusions they might arrive at), nor the statistical methods employed, nor—tempting though it be—the confidence they repose in existing techniques for measuring personality traits. Rather, I wish to fix attention upon a single point, namely, the grounds on which McClosky, on his own showing as to what conservatism is, assumes that he is measuring his respondents' "degree of conservatism." For the crucial step in the procedure summarized above, if his conclusions are to
have any relevance to the "conservative-liberal distinction," is surely the one which gets him over from (1) to (3), i.e., from the "characteristic . . . if not quintessential elements of the conservative outlook" to the "items" he is going to submit to his respondents. Either there is some reason to expect that agreement with the items will be predictive of agreement with the creed, or there is not. I submit that (a) no such reason exists, and (b) the researchers' "validation" of the items, as McClosky describes it, is—particularly given the size of the bet they are about to place on them—casual beyond belief. If, for example, we are going to take the judgment of a political theory class as to what beliefs are conservative, why introduce the creed (the class was not asked about the possible correspondence between the items and the creed) at all? And if we can establish "face validity" for the items by merely appealing to the "values which most people would designate as conservative," again the creed is superfluous; or else it embodies those same values and the question must still be faced: Do the items in fact reproduce the emphases of the creed? For, if we are obliged to answer that question No, McClosky must go back to step (3) and start all over again.

Here, as it seems to me, is how the items emerge from confrontation, in accordance with traditional procedures of textual analysis, with the creed:

The first of the items (that is, of the items McClosky sees fit to divulge) states that there must be "much wisdom" in "something" (which if it means anything must mean anything, that is, everything) that has grown up "over a long time." The creed, as the most cursory glance will convince the hastiest of readers, says nothing of the kind: it says that "society" (not everything in society, not even everything old in society, but society) embodies the "accumulated wisdom of the past" (which, be it noted, does not exclude its embodying also the accumulated folly of the past; let us remember, moreover, that liberalism itself, to which conservatives attribute no wisdom at all, is one of those "somethings" that have grown up "over a long time"), and that there is a presumption, but only a presumption, in favor of that which has "survived," and so of institutions "that have been tried and found to work" (italics added)" (that is, there is more accumulated wisdom than accumulated folly in society, and the way you tell the difference between that which is wise and that which is foolish, where institutions are concerned anyhow, is to ask: do they work?). In the creed, in a word, there is not a whisper of the suggestion that there is "bound" to be "much wisdom," or even any wisdom, in that which "grows up over a long time."

Take the second: "If you start [why, incidentally, "start"?] trying to change things very much, you usually make them worse." The relevant passage in the creed speaks not of "things" but, as we have noted, of "institutions that have been tried and found to work," and of "innovation" as being "more often"—not "usually," but "more often"—a "devouring conflagration" than a "torch of progress." Clearly, this is consistent, as McClosky's item is not, with, e.g., the proposition that change is in nearly half of all instances a "torch of progress," that is, a means of making things better. McClosky's item is a straight-out caricature of his point in the creed.
Or the third: to “recognize that the world is divided into superior and inferior people” is “not really undemocratic.” While the creed certainly warrants the proposition, “Some people are superior to other people,” it is silent as the tomb on the question, What is democratic and what undemocratic? It asserts the proposition, “Men are naturally unequal,” but makes no predication about it.

For the fourth item (“All groups can live in harmony . . . without changing the system in any way”), I find no conceivable textual basis in McClosky’s creed; in the fifth we leap from the creed’s assertion that “private property” is a “stabilizing institution of society” to an item which asserts that men who own property can be “depended . . . on” more than men who don’t. In the sixth we must get over somehow from “Society is . . . inordinately complex” and “There is a presumption in favor of whatever has survived” and that “innovation” is “more often a devouring conflagration, etc.” to the item—a very different matter, surely—“if you try to reform parts of [society] . . . you are likely to upset the whole system,” which is taking liberty enough in all conscience, and then to the assertion that the reason why that is true is that society is “so complicated.” No such connection—complicatedness: unwisdom of reforming parts of society—is present in the creed.

Not all the items, to be sure, are so remote from the creed. “It’s better to stick with what you have than to be trying things you don’t really know about” is a not inaccurate restatement, perhaps, of “There is a presumption, etc.” “Political authority comes not from us but from some higher power,” bears no doubt a cousinly resemblance to “Society is ruled by ‘divine intent’ and made legitimate by Providence” and to “Religion is the foundation of civil society” (only cousinly, however, because of the injection of “not from us” in the item, which many might interpret as presupposing, as the creed certainly does not presuppose, a necessary choice between authority deriving from divine intent and authority deriving from the people, that is, from us). “It is never wise to introduce changes rapidly, in government or the economic system,” is possibly a fair enough rendering of “Man’s traditional inheritance is . . . not to be cast away lightly.”

But all the other items in the first of McClosky’s two lists are, in one way or another, cruel distortions of the relevant propositions in the creed: “I prefer the practical man anytime to the man of ideas” will pass muster only for those who equate “ideas” and “reason”; “I’d want to know something will really work before I’d be willing to take a chance on it” is acceptable only if “There is a presumption, etc.” be taken to mean, as evidently it does not, that nothing should ever be tried until it has been “found to work” (cf.: “There must always be three taxis on this three-taxi taxistand); “a man doesn’t really get to have much wisdom until he’s along in years” can, so far as I can see, be tied back to no proposition in the creed; nor can “Private ownership of property is necessary if we are to have a strong nation,” since the creed does not address itself at any point to the question of national strength. McClosky’s score for the first of his two lists: three hits out of thirteen trips to the plate, that is, a batting average of a little less than .250, which simply won’t do for a lead-off man in the majors.
Nor do we get a different result from McClosky's second list: Does “Duties are more important than rights” restate the idea, indeed present in the creed, that duties are “superior” to rights? Only if “superiority” and “importance” are interchangeable concepts. Does “You can’t change human nature” catch up the meaning of “Man is . . . doomed to imperfection” and “All efforts at leveling are futile. . .”? Only, it would seem, if to change and to perfect and to level are (things equal to the same thing being equal to each other), all three of them, synonyms. Can “The world is too complicated to be understood by anyone but experts” be expected to tap the beliefs expressed in “Society is . . . incomparably complex” and “The superior classes must be allowed to differentiate themselves and to have a hand in the direction of the state”? Not unless the words “superiority” and “expertise” say the same thing. Besides, is it not notorious that the cult of expertise is a characteristic of liberal, not conservative, political theory?

And to what paragraph in the creed can McClosky point as justification for “We have to teach children that all men are created equal, but almost everyone knows that some are better than others”? The idea that some are better than others is indeed there (as also in the heads of most grown-ups), but McClosky’s item does not say that. It says “almost everyone” knows that some are better than others, a notion that is not present in the creed, and says on top of that that we must teach our children that “all men are created equal.” The creed does not address itself to what we must teach our children. McClosky then connects the two propositions with a “but” in such a fashion as to leave the affirmative respondent asserting neither of them, but rather the very different proposition, “We must teach our children that which is false” (wherefore what the item tests is not conservatism as McClosky defines it, but parental cynicism). Where in the creed can McClosky find “The heart is as good a guide as the head”? Only, it would appear, by latching onto “Theory is to be distrusted” and “reason . . . is a deceptive, shallow, and limited instrument.” Both of these, however, in the context in which McClosky himself presents them, point the way to reliance not on the “heart” but upon tradition, and, in any case, assert that something $x$ is better than, not as good as, something $y$. Even, then, if we concede McClosky the remaining two items (“No matter what the people think, a few people will always run things anyway,” and “People are getting soft and weak from so much coddling and babying”), concede them, that is, as recognizable baby-talk for “All efforts at levelling are futile, etc.”, he still gets only two for eight, or the slightly-improved batting average of .250 exactly.

We conclude: McClosky—on, we repeat, his own showing as to what conservatives believe—has no warrant for speaking of “conservatives” and “conservatism” in his conclusions.

Willmoore Kendall

Yale University