

If we concentrate our analysis on this kernel of the book, it becomes apparent that Mr. Lerner is primarily a utopian thinker. He understands how to arouse our emotions—but we cannot accept his arguments, or rather he fails to present them. In “Who Owns the Future,” he sets out seven propositions for making a peace which would utilize the resources of the world for the welfare of the masses, that is, a peace that would be neither a veil for American imperialism nor a total state. None of the propositions could have been better formulated, and yet at no place has an attempt been made to show how they can be carried out in practice. All groups in society—industry, labor, congress—are, in his view, dominated by purely selfish interests, all are “prisoners of their habits and thoughts.” If that is so, who is going to make the peace Mr. Lerner rightly wants? If the dominant forces of society are unable (or unwilling) to realize any of the propositions, does Mr. Lerner rely on spontaneous mass movements, fed by chiliastic longings?

The kernel of this book thus reveals a split between utopian thought and realistic analysis which is nowhere overcome, a predominance of utopianism which exemplifies the limping character of progressive thought in America.

Mr. Lerner’s thought comes closest to that of Harold Laski in England. And yet there is a fundamental difference between them. In contrast to Max Lerner, Laski writes for and within a powerful English movement, and, however critical one may be towards the Labor Party, it is at least a party, programmatically committed to the very principles which Mr. Lerner elaborates. The vacuum in Mr. Lerner’s thought corresponds to the vacuum in American politics. Since the political vacuum cannot apparently be filled, it is time to change the ideology.

FRANZ NEUMANN (New York).

**Perry, Ralph Barton, . . . *Shall not Perish from the Earth*.**  
The Vanguard Press. New York 1941. (159 pp.; \$1.50)

This is another attempt to resolve the “dilemma” of the democratic principle that by virtue of the rights and liberties deriving from that principle it becomes possible for democracy to be abolished by democratic means. Through an analysis of the philosophy underlying modern democracy, Perry shows that the democratic liberties are conditioned upon a definite end, namely, the creation and perpetuation of “a set of social institutions in which liberty is realized.” Democratic tolerance is restricted by this end: it is to be applied to all groups and forces which promote it, and to be denied to all those which are apt to destroy it. The criterion for this is provided by the individualistic principle: only those tendencies and movements are democratic which aim at enhancing the autonomy and reason of the individual, his “power of choice.” Liberty of thought thus emerges as the “essential liberty” of democracy and all other liberties are subordinated to it as requisites and means. The strength of Perry’s argument lies in the unerring faith with which he clings to the original critical content of individualism and in his frank admission that “the maxims of democracy do not describe what actually takes place, but define a hope and a goal of effort.”

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