The Populist Agrarian: Wendell Berry, William Jennings Bryan, and Conservatism in America

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Conservatism in a Liberal Order

If Louis Hartz's "liberal thesis"[1] could be summed up in a nutshell, it would probably read something like this: the United States is a society that both emerged from and has throughout its history held primarily to a broad, if sometimes inarticulate, "Lockean consensus" regarding human liberty, human progress, and human rights. This Lockean consensus emphasized the natural dignity of human life, the individuality and sovereignty of that life over the traditions and communities that it may have been born into, and the protection which property rights provide to the choices which that life makes. The result is an America which is free from any fundamental allegiance to, or even any truly deep struggle over, one's obligations to society, religion, or location, in a traditional European or aristocratic sense: we are a mobile people, capable of taking our identity, salvation, and livelihood with us as we travel and change and choose our way through life. As Hartz put it, the "reality of atomistic social freedom" is the "master assumption" behind American politics and history.[2] Some Americans may adopt a form of "conservatism" out of personal disposition or discontent, but a conservatism which wholly denies the classical liberal verities of human enlightenment, personal liberty, and individual self-ownership is not only incompatible with the American mainstream; such is, Hartz suggested, almost entirely absent from American history.

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[1] See Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955).

[2] Ibid, 62.

Of course, in the fifty years since Hartz advanced this thesis the "consensus" school has gone through many intellectual re-assessments. The republican revival, exhibited in the work of historians and political theorists from Gordon Wood to Barry Allan Shain to Michael Sandel, has demonstrated the enormous influence which a nominally illiberal or at least nonindividualistic concern for public religion, civic virtue, and the common good played in not only the American revolution, but much which came both before and afterward.[3] Yet Hartz's thesis remains, on the balance, more right than wrong. Essentially an academic restatement of Alexis de Tocqueville's 19th-century observations about the American reconceptualization of "self-interest," Hartz helps us see that American republicanism quickly became, in the hands of most of its advocates, a liberal republican hybrid, losing its aristocratic, landed, and explicitly religious character; he also helps us make sense of Civil War-era (and later) defenses of the South's illiberal plantation society which, for the most part, strained to explain hierarchy and tradition in the language of "rights." Today, while Hartz's liberal thesis is far from dominant in the study of either American history or political science, it remains a valuable analytical tool.

Yet it is also a profoundly limited and limiting one. To begin with a presumption of liberal or Lockean dominance is a problem in many cases, not because liberalism is necessarily absent in the figure or trend being examined, but because it assumes that liberal verities form the ideological or moral baseline from which other motivations or issues cause deviations, rather than taking something else as a baseline and seeing the liberal elements in the resulting argument as, perhaps, merely prudent adaptations. In this paper, I will take this second, anti-Hartzian approach in order to elucidate something that *is* profoundly conservative, even illiberal, in the thought of the populist leader William Jennings Bryan. "Populism" is rarely associated with conservatism, at least not when philosophically understood, and there are good reasons for that.[4] Nonetheless, Bryan's populism, I assert, took the form it did because he was deeply concerned with conserving that which he felt as valuable: specifically, conserving that arguably most "conservative" and traditional of all forms of life, the local and self-sustaining farm, a form of life which Hartz would have us believe formed not a repository for American identity but rather a continually left-behind launching pad for it. Bryan fought against this tendency, and strategically and prudently embraced a progressive and liberal populism in order to do so. So for Bryan, his liberalism and populism elaborated–rather than diluted–his original and baseline agrarian conservatism. Bryan's long influence on American politics, despite his failure to ever be elected president, therefore suggests that there may be, or at least may have been as recently as the early 20th-century, a true, non-European but still "deep" conservatism in the American character, one that could find through occasional populist action the ability to flourish in an otherwise wholly liberal environment. To demonstrate how this worked, consider by contrast the work of a truly illiberal American agrarian, the Kentucky farmer and writer Wendell Berry.

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[3] Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Politica Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), and Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Wendell Berry's Conservatism

Berry has become in recent years a hero to both particular kinds of liberals and conservatives. His longstanding critique of contemporary consumerism and free trade, and really of most of modern capitalism, has put him in the same boat as such figures as Vandana Shiva, Willian Grieder, or Ralph Nader.[5] This attack on what many contemporary Americans, Republicans and Democrats alike (but mostly Republicans), hail as "the American way" has been compounded in recent years by his denunciations of America's military, industrial, and environmental footprint, and in particular its militaristic actions abroad and justifications at home; in this, he also joins hands, or so it appeals, with such convinced liberal and green opponents of America's foreign policy establishment as Noam Chomsky, Alexander Cockburn, or Terry Tempest Williams.[6] But Berry's commitment to the traditional family as the central feature of a productive and virtuous human life, and his condemnation of birth control and abortion, have hardly made him a comfortable fit with liberal thinkers who take the liberation of women and their entrance into the workplace as an unalloyed good. In recent years, various more traditional or "paleo" conservatives (whose continuing, marginal presence in the midst of the mainstream Republican "conservative" establishment existence might be taken as further proof of Hartz's thesis) have discovered Berry, praising him as a "conservative's conservative," and seeing the connection he makes between environmentalism, an old-fashioned republican critique of the free market, and his isolationist attack on the American military establishment, as crucial to a communitarian or even anarchist (as opposed to libertarian) conservative revival.[7] Berry himself seems rather dismissive of major ideological and political movements in general, suspecting them of simply once again layering over the local knowledge that he wants to conserve above all else. However one reads him though, whether from the left or right, Berry is certainly not one thing: he is no liberal in a Hartzian sense.

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[4] See, for example, the recent argument by the conservative thinker John Lukacs, in *Democracy and Populism: Fear and Hatred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

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[5] Consider Wendell Berry's contributions to the edited volumes *The Case Against the Global Economy*, Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith, eds. (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1997), and *The Case Against "Free Trade": GATT, NAFTA, and the Globalization of Corporate Power* (San Francisco: Earth Island Press, 1993).

[6] The best collection of Berry's writings on this topic is probably *Citizenship Papers* (Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard, 1994).

[7] See the praise for Berry in the essays on "Community," "Localism," and "Agrarianism" in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2005).

Very simply, Berry rejects the idea of liberty outside of the "hard work and hand work on the small diversified farm," properly nestled within a small, deeply rooted, primarily agricultural community.[8] Urban and suburban life is, for Berry, simply dehumanizing, characterized by "marriage without love; sex without joy; drink without conviviality; birth, celebration, and death without adequate ceremony; faith without doubt or trial; belief without deeds; manners without generosity."[9] In good Burkean fashion, Berry finds the source of most of these ills in the abstract and bureaucratic claims to authority or rights that undergird modern mobility and the rational-legal and technological systems which make that mobility possible. American liberals, according to Hartz's suggestion, are middle-class movers, perfectly comfortable with seeing themselves, their freedoms and destinies, as transmutable and adaptable as available labor and capital allow. But for Berry, this is an assumption that robs Americans of the insights which the farm provides.

Farming is an economy of limits, and teaches one an ethic of limits. One cannot retool a plot of land in the same manner as a factory; you cannot redesign or alter a crop the way you can a production line or menu or novel or any other material thing that someone might produce through their labor. Of course, over time–through working with the land, judging the seasons, experimenting with different hybrids, developing new planting and harvesting procedures–the sort of agriculture any given person or community is involved with can change; and by the same token, it's not as though any non-agricultural business or practice can just turn on a dime: there are machines and investments that need tending to, there is training that has to take place, etc. Still, broadly speaking, Berry suggests that the essential distinction between an act of creative labor that involves oneself, or an organization, or a factory, and the labor which involves the land, holds firm: farming is–must be–careful, slow, patient, and hence supremely conservative work. In short, Berry argues that working on a farm teaches you about time, teaches you your own limits and thus turns you to others, teaches you value, as he put it in his essay "Going to Work," "the nature of the place itself and what is naturally there, the local ecosystem and watershed, the local landscape and its productivity, the local human neighborhood, the local memory." (This is in contrast, according to Berry, to "much modern work" which takes place in "academic or professional or industrial or electronic enclosures," and thus encourages a "separation between the workers and the effects of their work...permit[ting] the workers to think that they are working nowhere or anywhere.")[10]

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[8] Allan Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind: The Movement Towards Decentralist Thought in 20th-Century America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 2000), 186.

[9] Berry, *The Hidden Wound* (San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1969), 67.

Liberals of a certain stripe might claim that what Berry is discussing here is "positive liberty," in the sense praised by T.H. Green and attacked by Isaiah Berlin, and thus an idea at least somewhat compatible with Hartz's Lockean tradition: namely, the freedom *to do* something, the liberty that comes through empowerment and a more communitarian vision of society. Clearly the parallels between Berry's argument and such theoretical constructs are there, and worth pursuing. But Berry's agrarian community is simply *not* an individualistic one. He does not understand farm work and ownership to be a good way to situate and educate the individual in a community; rather, he envisions a decent a free society to be one not unlike that which existed in “peasant” or similarly limited societies, where one’s whole sense of self was caught up in a work and a role defined beyond one’s own choice. So a better parallel might be the "ordered liberty" that was accepted in different ways as an ideal by thinkers as different as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson (and arguably Hannah Arendt): a citizen achieves freedom by situating him or herself within, and working to maintain, ordered arenas of free action wherein he or she can take productive responsibility for themselves and their situation. Freedom means *shaping* your own choices, not merely being able to *make* choices, however many options there may be out there.

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[10] Berry, "Going to Work," in *The Essential Agrarian Reader: The Future of Culture, Community, and the Land*, Norman Wirzba, ed. (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 259.

Is there any sense in which this kind of illiberal agrarianism can be practiced and appreciated today? Many of those who find important truths in Berry’s critique of modern America believe that only a complete decentralization of the political economy (and the military-industrial complex as well, of course) would be sufficient for a recovery of the conservative virtues Berry praises; Berry himself, while occasionally given over to dreams of various command reforms (including the use of differential taxation to insure the wide distribution of property, the elimination of national and international markets in food and fiber, state-imposed limits on the application of technology to farming, and so forth[11]), basically seems to accept that the liberal order has triumphed, and that the role of he and other agrarians is to offer a lament for what is passed.[12] Yet Berry’s unyielding denunciation of liberal strategies and compromises is, in fact, not total. He has a soft spot for the Burley Tobacco Program, and not simply because it is an arrangement which his father helped to set up in the 1940s.[13] In truth, the New Deal–which always was arguably at least as much about building economic security and solidarity as about cutting welfare checks–included several programs that built upon the expected ability (and obligation!) of farmers to make wise use of their land, assuming the market would pay for and *respect* the kind of limited, disciplined work they were doing, with the Burley program being a prominent example of such. Farmer and writer Hal Hamilton, a Kentucky colleague of Berry's, described the program this way:

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[11] These recommendations and others can be found in, among other of Berry’s writings, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982), and *Home Economics* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987).

[12] Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind*, 197-198

> The Burley Tobacco program...has sustained more small- and moderate-sized family farmers than has any other agricultural program in any other state in the US. When I was raising 3-4 acres of tobacco on my 155-acre dairy farm in Kentucky in the 1970s, I was making enough money from tobacco to take care of my mortgage and loan payments on the whole farm. I never got a subsidy check. The companies were required to pay a fair price, or they didn't get the tobacco. Tens of thousands of small farmers making a living meant that church and school events were always packed with people. There was a healthy, lively rural economy and social fabric....Some of my economist friends didn't like the tobacco program because they said it "retarded efficiency." They explained to me that tobacco-farming methods were antiquated, that more tobacco could be produced more cheaply if the production weren't required to be disbursed among so many "inefficient" little farms. They were right, of course, but when farm leaders talked to me about the importance of the program, the never talked solely about efficiency—they always talked about the really good farmers whose income from tobacco enabled them to be livestock and grass farmers, thereby stewarding the land. They also always talked about how many kids were sent to college with tobacco checks. This was a stark example to me of two different paradigms about economic systems. One considers financial efficiency primary and all other goals derivative. The other considers social and environmental goals as important as financial ones.[14]

The point in talking about this program is to insist that, while the purer agrarian conservative argument may in fact be the radical one, the American liberal tradition, with its belief in progress and individual liberty and government action, does nonetheless have the capacity to make possible the conservation local and self-sustaining farms short of a total agrarian revolution. Obviously, the world of the small farm has changed, and is changing still more with every passing year. And by no means is the centralizing and progressive force of liberal government innocent in this change; Berry frequently and rightly excoriates the Department of Agriculture and other farming programs in his writings, with their obsession with growth, technology, centralization, efficiency, and choice. Nonetheless, there is–or at least demonstrably *can* be–a populist aspect to such legislation that has an entirely different effect on the possibility of conservation in the agrarian sense. It is this populism which made William Jennings Bryan, as committed as he was to liberal and progressive reform, a conservative with something to say to Wendell Berry, however different his 19th-century American optimism may sound when set alongside Berry's mournful words.

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[13] Berry, "The Problem of Tobacco," in *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community: Eight Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 53-68.

[14] Hamilton, "Sustainable Agriculture for Midsized Farms," *Choices: The Magazine of Food, Farm and Resource Issues*, 3rd Quarter 2003, 39-40.

William Jennings Bryan's Populist Conservatism

For many people, and especially for much of the media, populism *is* majoritarianism, pure and simple. Any and every demagogue who promises to attack an elite (any elite) and deliver some good (any good) to the majority of the people (which people? it rarely matters) is called a "populist," which of course just drags the label through the mud. From Huey Long to Hugo Chavez, all power-hungry types seem to get thrown into the same pot, the contents of which then get stirred around and splashed all over everyone trying to articulate a populist politics. To a degree, this is unavoidable and perhaps even fair: an authentic populism probably always will have a touch (or maybe more than a touch) of "do what the plain people tell you to do" rhetoric about it. As Michael Kazin puts it, Bryan's popular vision for America basically came down to a "yearning for a society run by and for ordinary people who lead virtuous lives."[15] Admittedly, such ambitions run up against contemporary pluralism, and many of Bryan's more notorious choices–most infamously his support of the prosecution at the Scopes trial just days before his death, denying evolution and appealing to biblical literalism–seem ready-made to condemn him in the eyes of modern liberals as a man who threw his lot in with the uneducated, the suspicious, the lower-class, the backward. But this is unfair, and not just to those common believers so labeled. Bryan's dislike for evolutionary teachings had far more to do with his hatred of Social Darwinism than his Protestant theology (which he always thought of secondary importance to the moral teachings of the scriptures anyway). His goal was to defend the dignity and the worth of human beings, something he did not think possible in the purely competitive and individualistic environment he associated both with rapacious capitalism and the Darwinistic doctrine of survival of the fittest.

In short, however much Bryan and other populists have spoken about the need to respect majorities (and Bryan himself talked about it a fair amount), his populist thinking had other premises besides simply doing whatever the polls said. His populism was not even necessarily always anti-elitist (assuming those elites emerge out of communities whose residents can genuinely see themselves in their representatives and leaders, and address them as members and equals within the community–in other words, the "delegate" concept of representation[16]). Populism's only real measurement is in the democratic empowerment of the people as a whole within their local communities: their ability as citizens to socially and culturally and economically define and manage their polity as their own. One might express this in terms of "affectivity." It is affection, specifically those feelings which arise from and depend upon a shared life, a defined (and therefore somewhat limited) life, that makes possible real social concern, a concern which is not restricted to a needs-tested distribution of a few select goods, but which actually seeks make the production of goods an egalitarian component of everyone's participation in the community. It is this connection between production or “producerism” as the best source of community affection, and the necessity of such affection for direct and local democratic life to be possible, that made Bryan into an agrarian. He was not a farmer himself, and though surrounded by them all his life he never claimed his support of them to be a straightforward majoritarian or parochial calculus. Instead, his populist support for rural and small-town America and the farm-based society which it historically emerged from, and the liberal and progressive tools he employed in the name of populism, followed essentially from his deeply *conservative* wish to conserve the hospitality and generosity, the familiarity and piety, and most of all the independence that he felt the Social Gospel called for and that Tocqueville had described as crucial to democracy.[17]

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[15] Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Knopf, 2006).

[16] Jeff Taylor, *Where Did the Party Go? William Jennings Bryan, Hubert Humphrey, and the Jeffersonian Legacy* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 163-167.

Bryan’s peculiar conservatism expressed itself in many ways: in his evangelical Christianity and support for such radical measures as Prohibition, his Jacksonian notions of village democracy and advocacy of such innovations as the popular initiative and referendum, his distrust in educated and urban elites and his consequent willingness to flirt with socialist responses to corporate power. None of this was especially about individual rights and liberal justice; mostly, it was about collective regeneration and participatory democracy (the latter needing the former). This is particularly clear as one examines Bryan's positions in detail. When it came to matters of purely civil rights, as exercised by individuals, he was profoundly illiberal, in a way most contemporary Americans would find intolerable; he was to a degree a supporter of white supremacy and Jim Crow laws throughout the American South, and his support for Prohibition had at least an element of anti-immigrant Know-Nothingism to it. Yet when it came to matters of communal economic and political conditions, his was a decidedly "left" voice, defending strikers and supporting a heavily progressive income tax. If it involved bureaucratic redistribution or intervention in the socio-economic life of the people, he was suspicious of it; but if it involved equalizing and restructuring the power which defined the lives of the people, and it was done administered with their participation, then his support was fulsome.

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[17] See ibid, 113-114; see also Bryan, *William Jennings Bryan: Selections*, Ray Ginger, ed. (Indianapolis; Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 75-78; Bryan, *The Credo of the Commoner: William Jennings Bryan*, William Jennings Bryan, Jr. and Franklin Modisett, eds. (Los Angeles: Occidental College, 1968), 53 and passim; Lawrence W. Levine, *Defender of the Faith: William Jennings Bryan: The Last Decade, 1915-1925* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 227-228.

A detour into the history of political thought can perhaps clarify why Bryan's populist politics appears to modern eyes to be an odd mix of liberal and conservative–or, as I would prefer to put it, liberal applications of conservative priorities. Most of what the so-named conservative movement today primarily wishes to conserve is the possibility of material growth, seeing–as classical liberals have ever since John Locke–the essential rights and freedoms of the individual as tied up in the institution of private property and government-protected social and economic choice. That, according to those in this tradition, is the baseline which precedes all thinking about politics; any intrusion into this supposedly natural arrangement is tantamount to a Nietzschean will to power, a potentially fascist sacralization of an apparently spontaneous world. Hence was the religious and moral fervor of Bryan mocked and feared by the business class of his day. But this Lockean description can be contested, and there are liberal tools which can be used to carry forward this contestation, assuming they are used in the right way. Sheldon Wolin's description of Locke's argument focuses on what is, and is not, to be considered part of this natural order, an order whose existence both old-fashion conservatives and the classical-liberals-turned-conservative would recognize today, but whose constituent elements, at least as Bryan and Berry perceived them through farm life, include much more than individual economic rights:

> The upshot of Locke's argument was to obscure the political character of civil society. Its political qualities did not appear *ab nihilo*; they had been anticipated by the political form given the ideal state of nature. What can be said to be genuinely new political elements in civil society were introduced via the explicit agreement whereby men accepted a common body of rules and promised to obey the decisions of the majority. But more important was the minimal character of the political order. By this is meant not that the powers and jurisdiction of government were closely restricted, for Locke's language allowed generous scope for government action, but rather that Locke initiated a way of thinking in which society, rather than the political order, was the predominant influence. Instead of asking the traditional question: what type of political order is required if society is to be maintained? Locke turned the question around to read: what social arrangements will insure the continuity of government?[18]

Anyone familiar with the history of political thought can identify the basic critique which lurks deep within Wolin's argument–it is Rousseau, whose *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* threw down a gauntlet that every defense of modern liberalism ever since has had to pick up or ignore at their peril. What Rousseau saw in the modern world was not the seamless manifestation of a natural economic and social order, but a construct, a set of conventions which pass themselves off as spontaneous but which are, in fact, the product of history, a history in which introduction of property forced human beings into a settled existence, characterized by over extension, dependency, and inequality. Since, as Rousseau wrote, "ties of servitude are formed by men's mutual dependence and the reciprocal needs that unite them, it is impossible to subjugate a man without first having placed him in the position of being unable to do without another." Thus so long as an economy of complete self-sufficiency–or, at the outside, of rustic and wholly voluntaristic village life (which seems to be Berry’s mourned-for ideal)–obtained, human beings were both free and equal, “but the moment one man needed the help of another, as soon as it was found to be useful for one to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property appeared, work became necessary, and the vast forests changed into smiling fields that had to be watered with the sweat of men, and where slavery and misery were soon seen to sprout and grow together with the harvests.”

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[18] Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought, Expanded Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 276.

Rousseau was a complete misanthrope, of course, and neurotic to boot. Voltaire was being unfair, but not completely so, when he mocked Rousseau for seemingly calling for a retreat from modern life, modern technology, and the very idea of civilization. Conservatives since Burke have held him up as a villain, as a deeply disturbed individual who preached a kind of blindedness to actual human nature, hoping instead for individuals to alienate themselves entirely to a single collective within which individuals will be forced to recreate Rousseau's version of the natural world and thus be "free." There is a lot of truth to this caricature. But focus on his diagnosis, rather than his solutions (which, one should note, Rousseau himself never expressed much faith in). Rousseau pushes one to think about historically embedded social and economic forces, and think about them *politically*, rather than seeing “politics” as something which already individuated selves choose to do with a given social and economic inheritance. This is not–or at least not necessarily–a “sacralization of politics”; rather it is an attempt to refuse to grant all that which makes actual “conservation” difficult.

For some, this reading of populism will seem perverse; it is, they may allege, weighing down what is merely a specific, dangerous (because unenlightened and insufficiently concerned about individual justice) form of democratic action with a metaphysical significance it does not deserve. Others liberals will sniff at it carefully, fearful that Bryan’s determination to structure political, economic, and social life around farm-based virtues opened the door to a Rousseauian desire to convert (or force) the country into a general will; likely they would prefer the later, more technocratic and centrist liberalism of that has dominated since WWII. But I would ask open questioners of Hartz's thesis if it, for all its obvious insight, has not made us confused over what the American tradition offers, and if there might not be good reason to see certain "progressive" ideas as central to any *substantively* conservative politics today. Consumption is made possible by and in turn shapes our socio-economic fabric; if the weave of such fabric (a "seamless garment," anyone?) is the truly proper conservative concern, then those of a truly conservative temperament will want to address the causes and consequences of consumption, rather than leaving it off the political table entirely. Berry would like respond by saying that the current table may not even be capable of handling the question; but Bryan, the populist agrarian, thought otherwise.

Ultimately, what Bryan and Berry share is greater than what they disagree on, but their disagreement is nonetheless deep, and it tells us something about whether Hartz's thesis has not perhaps become *more* rather than less true over the years, as the conservative elements of American thought have retreated over the past century even further from the agrarian option which brought them to bear on liberal and progressive politics in Bryan's day. Still, populism properly understood remains an option in American politics, both within and in spite of the two major parties. And through populist reforms, perhaps a little bit of agrarian conservatism can still find a place, here and there. Of course, so long as populism gives voice to the conservative sensibility as I have defined it, it will remain a threat to the liberal imagination. The old liberal argument was either that the gross particularities of America could be overcome, transcended by a rational and principled cosmopolitan neutrality (Martha Nussbaum's stoic universal humanism), or failing that, that the populist component of our national imagination could be changed into something secular: a purely civic nationalism, where our affections for the particular aren't focused on any one–often agrarian–habitus so much as on the interventionary rights and laws behind it all (Jürgen Habermas's postnational *Verfassungspatriotismus*, or “constitutional patriotism”). For those further on the antireligious, anti-Bryanite left, the idea was to turn his populism against him, and hope that economic populism would be the solvent that would melt away all those negatives which secular liberals have traditionally associated with reactionary cultural politics. These both completely misunderstand affectivity, for they leave the *authority* of the people, and the authoritative bonds which people make (or “imagine,” if you prefer), out of the equation. They fail to take seriously that our loves–about which Berry has written both passionately and thoughtfully–are inseparable from our (material, economic, and social) lives, and so that if you marginalize what someone loves–including the land they love, and the life that land makes possible–then you may as well be attacking their lives. The solution to America’s liberal problem from a conservative perspective must be populist one, in the sense that it must strive to emulate the authority and the affection which pulls people together, and makes them share (or mutually limit, if you prefer, as happens on the farm) at least part of their lives.