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James J. Farrell. *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism.* New York: Routledge, 1997. 360 pp. $37.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-415-91386-7; $142.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-91385-0.

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'Personalism' in Sixties Social Movements

Of the many recent studies of social movements in the 1960s, James Farrell's is among the most insightful, original, and important. He argues that, amid a sense of spiritual crisis, a common thread of "personalism" ran through the era's movements. He defines personalism as the belief that an ideal society (1) should be based neither on capitalism nor state socialism, (2) should give primacy to individual conscience, and (3) should provide bonds of community. Although this ideal could be construed as libertarian, personalism lacked an absolute commitment to the individual. Deep suspicion of the state as well as individual-based moral principle made personalism a form of anarchism, which Farrell identifies as anarcho-communitarianism.

Farrell begins with a shrewd discussion of Dorothy Day's Catholic Worker movement which, although founded in 1933, remained vibrant during the 1950s. Borrowing personalism from French Catholics, Catholic Workers decried both capitalism and communism, preached rural communitarianism, opposed war as an act of personalist conscience, and called for individual responsibility inside an anarcho-communitarian setting. By the late 1960s these ideas would lead Daniel and Phillip Berrigan to a militant, radical Catholicism. Farrell's most original contribution is to demonstrate the importance of personalist-based Catholic radicalism to the sixties.

Farrell contends, less convincingly, that the Beats represented a personalist attack upon mainstream values. Although some evidence, especially concerning the Catholic Jack Kerouac, sustains the argument, the Beats never developed any coherent philosophy, personalist or otherwise. The Beats did question conformity and, as writers, had a keen desire for unfettered personal expression. These libertarians were not a true community and practiced individualism in anomic ways.

Farrell also finds personalism in the Civil Rights movement and especially in the ideas of Martin Luther King, Jr. King trained at Boston University, which had long been a stronghold for Protestant personalism. Farrell observes that other influences, especially the black Baptist church, also shaped King, and King, of course, was only one leader in the Civil Rights movement. Personalism, however, proves fruitful for explaining the nature of the troubled relationship between King and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. While these African American students often disagreed with King, they shared his belief in anarcho-communitarianism. Ironically, because both King and SNCC insisted on restructuring society on the basis of conscience, this made accommodation more difficult because of differences in conscience.

After World War II, most American pacifists were personalists. A. J. Muste and others opposed war both as an act of conscience and out of hostility to state power. In the late 1950s antinuclear groups also acted out of personalism. So did Women Strike for Peace, founded in 1961. WSP kept no master membership lists, nor did the national board organize or coordinate local activities. This grassroots, bottom-up politics was one of the era's most important innovations.

Farrell is more convincing in arguing personalism with reference to Catholic Workers, religious-based Civil Rights activists, and pacifists than he is with regard to students. He is correct that scholars have tended to see the New Left, including Students for a Democratic Society, only in terms of connections to and differences with the Old Left, and it is true that the student movement of the sixties was more leftist in rhetoric than in either organization or practice. Nevertheless, the personalist strand that Farrell sees in the New Left was only one of many threads. As Farrell notes, much student personalism came from the Civil Rights movement.

Chapters on opposition to the Vietnam War and the Counterculture are disappointing. The antiwar movement had many roots, and most of the evidence does

not suggest personalism as a motive. Opposition included revolutionary fervor or seeing the war as a bad investment. The Counterculture did have a communitarian side, but personalism was neither the basis for hippiedom nor for the despair that lurked just beneath the gawdy surface. While Farrell is correct that personalism played a major role in postwar radicalism, his concentration on personalism distorts the analysis. Because personalism applies most convincingly to Catholic Workers, one of the lesser movements of the sixties, Farrell ends up overemphasizing Catholic Workers in postwar history. More might be learned by structuring the analysis around the Civil Rights movement.

Farrell's book demonstrates that personalism operated throughout the postwar years. He shows that this idea helped shape specific radical movements and, more important, limited their success. Movements that embraced personalism could not develop robust philosophies, nor organize and discipline members, nor build permanent institutional structures. The result was a period of intense social concern that could not be sustained. Personalism foreshadowed movement collapse.

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