

**THE DENIGRATION OF TRANSCENDENCE
IS THE PRICE OF
THE ABUSE OF POWER**

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This Thinksheet's thesis you already know, but it may help to state it in other words: when any power is abused--in government, in church, in business, in education, in sports & entertainment--trust in the leadership rots into **cynicism**, the public preferring anarchy. Being unstable, anarchy soon yields to **tyranny**, some human supernova exploding into greater power, psychospiritual if not also structural, than had the former abuser of power. Prevention must include, if not begin with, a realistic assessment of human leadership-needs. This assessment has a theological dimension: the inevitable mutual shaping between a people's God-idea and their leader-ideal....The Thinksheet's occasion: the dismal fact that in a few days we are to elect, of two men who are only of us, someone who fails to satisfy our human politico-transcendent needs.

1. So I've already implied that a President, in addition to being "one of **us**," should be also "one of **them**," a superior being. We want no truck with any who think themselves superior or are not. We want an egalitarian noble (noble in character, not in class; and of natural rather than artificial noble bearing). Impossible? Not so: instance Lincoln. Our **hunger for nobility** is so great that we can take those of noble class provided they honor their underlinings as their equals under God: instance Washington. And--frightening fact--so great that we tend to deify the young prince who treats his underlings as inferiors: instance Kennedy of Camelot, to whose Cape Cod home Loree & I biked yesterday, as we often do.

2. "Charisma" is too weak a word for what I'm talking about. What I'm talking about I heard live in the voices of leaders in the 1930s--FDR, Hitler, Churchill, JFK's father (48 years ago today, my diary says, I heard J.P. live from London. He was an Irish chieftan building a dynasty--as in Boston Old Fitz had done, whose daughter Rose had married J.P.). Aristocracy is unnecessary: two I mentioned (FDR & Churchill) were aristocrats; Hitler was lower-class; and J.P. rose through the middle class to the upper class....King was upper-class in the social world of American blacks; besides, he had "class," as do several of his successors (esp. Andy Young & Jesse Jackson). I can still hear Senator Ev. Dirksen, who had "it" (what I'm trying to describe), call it "a sense of **pagentry** the people need and will have at whatever cost."

3. It's rare that a human being is outstanding for both **immanence** ("one of us") and **transcendence** ("one of them," the superior beings). So rare that it's a good idea to split it, as presently in Britain's case--two queens, one of the people & one of what my Episcopal-reared grandmother called "the quality," a phrase she applied both to royalty and to what met her standards for true nobility....Everybody feels in the gut why, during the presidential primaries, "dwarfs" was in: the Republicans had six of them and the Democrats nine. No transcendence. No pagentry (except for Jesse Jackson). No **aura**. No **awe**.

4. I've heard some **religious leaders** with "it." Some religious traditions, eg. the Southern Baptists, encourage it and so produce more who have it. I've felt it in being with Geo. Truitt, Billy Graham, and many lesser known lights....The best religious leaders communicate a **sense of presence and Presence** no matter their personality type. How different I've found them to be in conversations: Pastor Martin Niemoeller, Cardinal Augustin Bea, slum missionary Toyohiko Kagawa,....

5. Transcendence is denigrated also by a public that looks for it primarily in the worlds of **sports and entertainment**. Televangelists are denigrators for this reason as well as because of their abuse of power, the power to pick the pockets of their devotees. In politics, Pres. Reagan represents the same straddle of denigration: an entertainer in politics instead of in religion.

6. Walter Bagehot (d.1877) was full of wisdom on the subject of this Thinksheet. Have a few choice tidbits: (1) "The great qualities fit for a great crisis are impediments in common times." (2) "As long as the human heart is strong and the human reason weak, Royalty will be strong because it appeals to diffused feeling, and Republics weak because they appeal to the understanding." (3) "Constitutional monarchy" best brackets political needs. (4) An established nobility "prevents the rule of wealth--the religion of gold." (5) Monarchy is both more interesting and more dangerous than democracy [his view, my summary of it].