

Lincoln's 200th Birthday: The Legislator as Poet

by Judah Philip Rubinstein

In 2009, at the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth, Philip Rubinstein presented a written version of a class he had given on several occasions on the role of Lincoln's poetry in shaping the American spirit. Phil was one of the leading members of Lyndon LaRouche's organization, whose classes and leadership recruited hundreds of young Americans, and young people from around the world, to join the LaRouche organization. Phil's passing, on August 29, 2020, was mourned by those who loved him and learned from him. Phil's text was included in the memorial pamphlet for him. An edited version of it is presented here. It is important to recall that that year, 2009, followed the 2008 breakdown of the international financial system, a crisis which remains unresolved today.

Abraham Lincoln told the following story, when beseeched by job-seekers in Washington:

An eccentric old king was so much bothered by bad weather, that he hired a prophet to prophesy the royal weather for him. One day, as the king was dressing for an important engagement, he asked the weather prophet what the weather would be like.

"It will be a bright, clear night," predicted the prophet.

The king, following the advice of his prophet, put on a light suit and left his umbrella in the palace closet as he started off. On the road he chanced to meet an old farmer riding a jackass, holding an umbrella over his head.

"Why do you have an umbrella, old-timer?" asked

the king. "There's not a cloud in the sky."

"It is going to rain," said the farmer.

Sure enough, a little while later the sky swelled full of big black clouds and it began to pour. The king was soaked to the skin, and his fine suit was ruined.

The next day, the king sent for the farmer. "I want to hire you as my weather prophet," he said.

"Sire, it ain't me," said the farmer. "It is my jackass.

Every time that critter's ears hang down low, it's sure to rain."

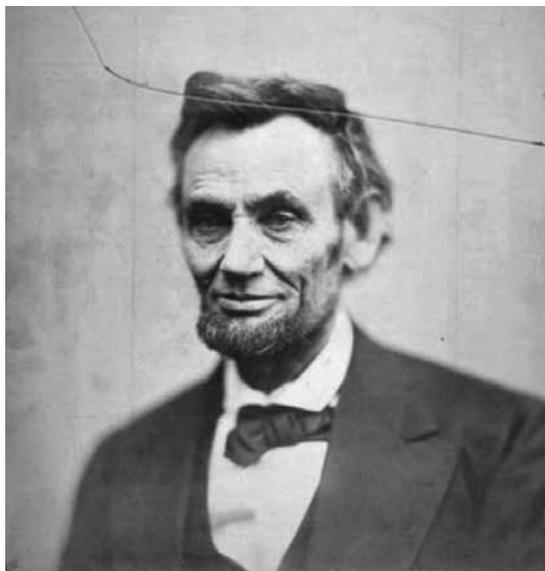
"Very well," said the king. "Go home, old man. I'll hire the jackass."

And so he did. And this is why there are so many jackasses in Washington. Now, ever since that time, every jackass wants an office.

In a recent year-end interview on the LaRouche internet radio show, Lyndon LaRouche developed the concept of political leadership:

Interviewer: We are coming up on the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, and Lyn, when you were speaking of the question of leadership, clearly, Lincoln understood this principle of poetry....

LaRouche: Well, all great thinkers—Franklin Roosevelt, in his own way, also—any person who is a great person, has a sense of poetic expression, and ... it is Classical musical poetic expression.... This is obviously the case with Abraham Lincoln, and it was also the case, largely, with Franklin Roosevelt. Franklin Roosevelt's cadences, his manner of speaking, the way he



Alexander Gardner

Abraham Lincoln on February 5, 1865.

formulated ideas, were an essential part of his power as a leader, just as Lincoln—Lincoln more significantly, of course—but Roosevelt had much the same tradition....

But *always*, it's an attempt to convey real ideas, and in this time, the problem is, we live in a period of complete sophistry ... like Lincoln for example: You had people who actually could express ideas. And you had great music and great composers ...to develop the ability to express *ideas*. Express them, yes, in a persuasive way, because that's important, but also to get people to suddenly see a vision of an idea. It's what the great poet does, and the great musician does, the great composer.



President Franklin Roosevelt.

ship is nothing but creativity. Percy Bysshe Shelley develops this as a force of nature, a nature encompassing the qualities that make mankind unique, in his “A Defence of Poetry” as also in his poetry:

According to one mode of regarding those two classes of mental action, which are called Reason and Imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another how-

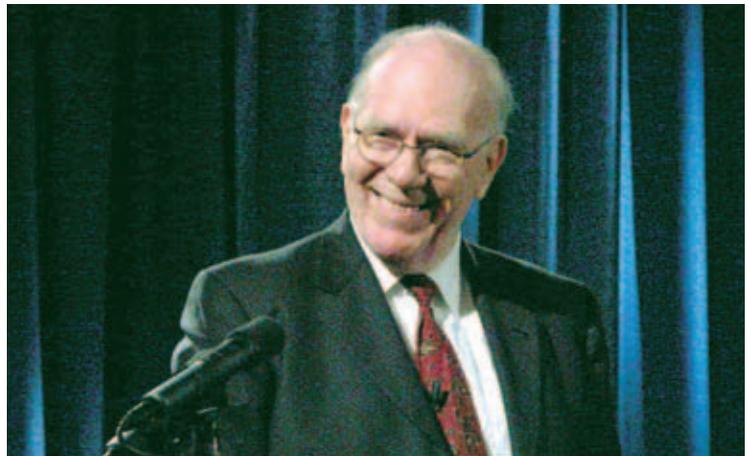
ever produced; and the latter, as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to color them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity. The one is the principle of synthesis and has for its objects

Political Leadership Is Creative

Political leadership is rooted in the creative powers of an individual, expressed to enable society and its members to face and solve the limits, the crisis the society faces. This is the same uniquely human capability as in scientific discovery of universal principle, or perhaps even more like that in great classical art, where the subject is human society and creativity itself. Thus statecraft—politics—is not a pragmatic or dirty game, but succeeds only through the insight and power of the individual human mind, which then evokes some reflection of that insight in the populace.

Friedrich Schiller called statecraft the highest form of art, the hewing of the necessary freedom, the unleashing of creativity out of the stones of nature and the fixity of human traditions and failed beliefs. This requires a reflection on the entirety of human history, and the process of discovery, development and failure, that has brought us thus far.

To lead, is to take society somewhere heretofore unknown, out of the path doomed by its mis-evaluation of our human mission to fail. At a point where the extension of present belief means the end of a culture, leader-



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

“All great thinkers have a sense of Classical musical-poetic expression. This is the case with Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt.”

—Lyndon LaRouche

those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself; the other is the principle of analysis and its action regards the relations of things, simply as relations; considering thoughts, not in their integral unity but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results. Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known; Imagination is the

perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and Imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to the Imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance.

Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be ‘the expression of the Imagination, and Poetry is connate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Aeolian lyre; which move it, by their motion, to ever-changing melody. But there is a principle within the human being and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them. It is as if the lyre could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound; even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre....’

Shelley, like Johannes Kepler, places the true harmonies of the world in the human mind, its creative imagination. This is itself a universal principle, which is expressed as a social force:

The most unfailing herald, companion and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is Poetry. At such periods there is an accumulation of the power of communicating and receiving intense and impassioned conceptions respecting man and nature. The persons in whom this power resides, may often as far as regards many portions of their nature have little apparent correspondence with that spirit of good of which they are the ministers. But even whilst they deny and abjure, they are yet compelled to serve, the Power which is seated on the throne of their own soul. It is impossible to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human

nature with a comprehensive and all penetrating spirit, and they are themselves the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations, for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present, the words which express what they understand not, the trumpets which sing to battle and feel not what they inspire: the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World.

It is the individual who foreshadows the future, as only human insight can, who creates a lawful image of the future, who is capable of leading in a time of crisis. This is true even as he refers necessarily to the precedent of past developments, and discovery of those ideas, which have led us out of prior crisis.

Political Leadership Is Discovery

Political leadership is discovery. This is a quality not often seen in its fullness, and that is the quality in Lincoln that reaches us today, and that is what should be celebrated. In Lincoln, poetic thinking was the center of his genius, as he has left us some of the greatest speeches and prose in the English language, and this is based in his method of thinking.

Lincoln’s 200th birthday is ironically (as irony was central to Lincoln) a year of existential crisis for this nation and all nations. A crisis of proportions that threatens humanity, as none since the 14th Century Dark Age catastrophe. Lincoln came to his Presidency knowing that the nation was at stake, and that the issue was whether the United States would fulfill its historic mission as a true republic, because, if it fell short of that, it would cease to exist. There is no doubt, that this is what moved Lincoln in all his actions, and no lesser sense. He had left politics in the late 1840s and reentered after a number of years, only at the point that the nation was clearly headed to self-destruction.

With the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, Lincoln knew that the British scheme of breaking the U.S., over the issue of slavery, and free trade, was well on its way to succeeding, just as he, and his mentor John Quincy Adams, had seen the destructive path laid out by Andrew Jackson and his successors in destroying the American System of Economy. But now there were few capable of acting. Lincoln, seeing the failure of the



George Peter Alexander Healy

President John Quincy Adams, Lincoln's mentor.

Whig Party, acted to build a movement to save the Union, and deal effectively with slavery. Lincoln had forecast in his "House Divided" speech, that the United States could not survive half slave, half free. It would be all one, or all the other, but this would mean the end of the United States.

This was the forecast, that brought Lincoln back to politics, to save the nation. Lincoln's election forced the British to unleash the Confederacy. Lincoln's Presidency was not a threat to the South, but was a threat to save the United States, implement the American System, and so end slavery. Thus, the secession and civil war had then to be provoked. In that sense only, was Lincoln the cause of war.

Today we are in a similar existential moment, in which the act of solving the crisis is itself a threat to the British financial Empire that has enslaved humanity.

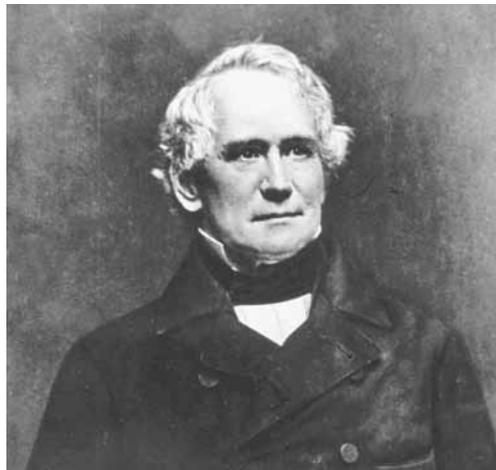
On July 25, 2007, Lyndon LaRouche in an international webcast stated, that the present world financial

system had died, and would destroy the world economy. Within days of that forecast world finances ground to a halt. We are living that crisis today. LaRouche is himself, the last true representative of the concept of this nation that was infused in the likes of Lincoln, as in Washington, J.Q. Adams, and FDR. Those few leaders saved this nation from tragedy at crucial moments. That leadership is required now. Each juncture required one who knew our historic enemy: empire in the form of the Anglo-Dutch Empire of global finance, and in fact of slavery in its various forms, and simultaneously understood the American System as a universal principle governing the mission and development of this republic....

Lincoln's genius was seen in many aspects, not always recognized. He was a strategic genius who applied himself to win the civil war, despite the opposition of the British and French Empires, and became the military leader of the war, the loved Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic.¹ He understood the true meaning of the Declaration of Independence based in his lodestar for the crisis: All men are created equal. For Lincoln this meant each individual's capability to develop.

Lincoln's concept of the Republic and the American System was a Platonic conception; the Union was the whole that, properly understood, was prior to any of its parts; any state. Without the Union, slavery would triumph.

His economic policy was a policy of scientific development based in the constitutional power of the Congress and the Executive to issue credit and utter currency. His program, as he said, was like the old lady's dance, short and sweet: the National Bank, internal improvements and the tariff. Lincoln's economic policy was advised by the great American economist and enemy of British liberalism and free trade, Henry C. Carey.²



Henry C. Carey, economic adviser to Lincoln.

1. See H. Graham Lowry, "Re-creating the Republic: How Lincoln Organized Victory of the Union," *EIR*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 9, 2009, pages 70-79.

2. See W. Allen Salisbury, *The Civil War and the American System: America's Battle with Britain, 1860-1876*. Executive Intelligence Review, Washington, D.C., 1992.

In the midst of civil war, Lincoln created the greatest agro-industrial power in the world, and unified the Republic as a continental nation from the Atlantic to the Pacific. This made the United States a new kind of power. The transcontinental railroad is perhaps the best known of his legacies, but more was built: canals and locks, dams, agriculture and mining schools based on land grants. He brought in leading scientists to develop industry, technology and agriculture. All this together led to an explosion of U.S. development and its becoming a world power, leading to its role, after the 1876 Exposition, as the model for development of nations, such as Germany, Japan, France and later China.

It was this threat of a global alliance for development that terrified the Anglo-Dutch Empire, leading the empire into organizing not only World War I but in fact the chaos and horrors of the 20th Century. But to understand how Lincoln accomplished this at a deeper level, go back to the original quote from LaRouche.



John P. Soule

An interior view of the Coliseum at the National Peace Jubilee and Music Festival, held in Boston to commemorate the end of the Rebellion, June 15-19, 1869.

The Soul of a Poet

Lincoln had the soul of a poet. He was the legislator as poet, the law-giver who renewed the American Revolution by organizing victory over Empire, by organizing freedom for the enslaved.

The core of Lincoln’s poetic expression is in his humor, irony, and polemic, which are the foundation of the poetry of his greatest speeches: the Gettysburg Address, and above all, his Second Inaugural Address. To some, such as Charles Adams and Ralph Waldo Emerson, he was crude and boorish, but in reality, it was his humor about all things human, even the scatological, that made him unique. Some samples of his humor are a good place to start.

Once, when Lincoln was gazing out of the window of his law office in Springfield, Illinois, he saw a plump and stately matron, wearing a plumed hat, making her way gingerly across the muddy street. Suddenly she slipped and fell back on her buttocks:

“Reminds me of a duck,” he told his law partner, who was standing beside him.

“How so?” asked his partner.

“Feathers on her head,” said Lincoln, “and down on her behind.”

In an address to the Illinois legislature in 1837, Lincoln stated: “These capitalists generally act harmoniously, and in concert, to fleece the people.”

He once described Generals Grant and Sherman in the following manner: “Grant has the bear by the hind-leg and Sherman takes off the hide.” And, of course the often quoted incident, when an influential politician warned Lincoln not to trust Grant, because Grant was a drunkard:

“So, Grant is a drunk, is he?” mused Lincoln.

“Yes, he is, and I can prove it,” was the answer.

“Well, all I want to know is the brand of whisky General Grant uses,” Lincoln said.

“The brand of whisky?”

“Yes,” replied the President. “I would like to furnish the same brand to my other generals.”

Lincoln most often uses his sense of irony about

human nature. He demands that his listener or letter-reader view themselves from the standpoint of a higher purpose, a universal mission, that places their grievances in proportion to that reality. Often Lincoln directs himself to his presumed supporters with biting irony, and he was in constant dialogue with the U.S. population and its various factions. His point was to bring them to victory with both Union and emancipation, but also, to educate them to the principles needed to go further forward.

This irony and polemic with the population can be sampled in some of his speeches and his public letters which were circulated in the tens of thousands. Especially notable are those when he is at his sharpest with his supporters, at most difficult points, points of near despair in the war. For Lincoln, his relationship to the citizenry was a dramatic one, his task was to advance the nation, to face the crisis, and to prepare the future.

Lincoln was steeped in Shakespeare and the King James Bible, Robert Burns, Edgar Allan Poe and others, but above all Shakespeare, which he read frequently to his Cabinet. He did not know all of Shakespeare, but what he knew, he knew in depth: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and more. He attended dozens of Shakespeare's performances during his four years in office. Shakespeare was his strategic guide, and so he addressed the citizens of the United States, the soldiers of the Union Army, and in his way, the world.

To Save the Union

In August of 1862, presumptive supporter Horace Greeley, a leading newspaper editor, led an attack on Lincoln for his lack of commitment to ending slavery—feeding off abolitionist sentiment which was hostile to Lincoln. All this, while despair prevailed in the North. Lincoln responded in a public letter, circulated beyond the newspaper itself:

I have just read yours of the 19th, addressed to myself through the *New-York Tribune*. If there be in it any statements, or assumptions of fact, which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be in it any inferences which I may believe to be falsely drawn, I do not now and here, argue against them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient



Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

William Shakespeare was Lincoln's strategic guide. Lincoln frequently read from his works to his Cabinet.

and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing" as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored; the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union, unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it

helps to save the Union, and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty, and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men every where could be free.

This polemical response is highlighted by the fact that he is speaking to supporters and forcing them to recognize the folly of ignoring the reality, that without the Union, nothing good was possible, slavery would either be ensconced and spread and the nation lost, or the Union would survive and slavery strangled by the development typified by the industrial north. Lurking in the background was the British threat to recognize the South and aid in breaking up the United States. The British Empire dominated through the so-called free market, which in the South meant the slave-based cotton trade. Lincoln posed the dilemma to his audience: would you divide the nation and leave the South to slavery? Is that your abolition?

Again, in September 1863, with great doubts about the survival of the Union still hovering over the nation, the Illinois Republican Party held a convention. The Governor and a significant portion of the party rejected the notion, that the war was being fought for the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln again responded in a public letter, one perhaps less well known or frequently quoted. The letter simultaneously answers his critics and contradicts the present-day slander of Lincoln as not really anti-slavery. Indeed, he was often attacked as an abolitionist.

Your letter inviting me to attend a mass meeting of unconditional Union men, to be held at the capital of Illinois on the 3d day of Sep-

tember has been received. It would be very agreeable for me thus to meet my old friends at my own home; but I can not just now be absent from here so long as a visit there would require.

The meeting is to be of all those who maintain unconditional devotion to the Union; and I am sure that my old political friends will thank me for tendering, as I do, the nation's gratitude to those other noble men whom no partisan malice or partisan hope can make false to the nation's life.

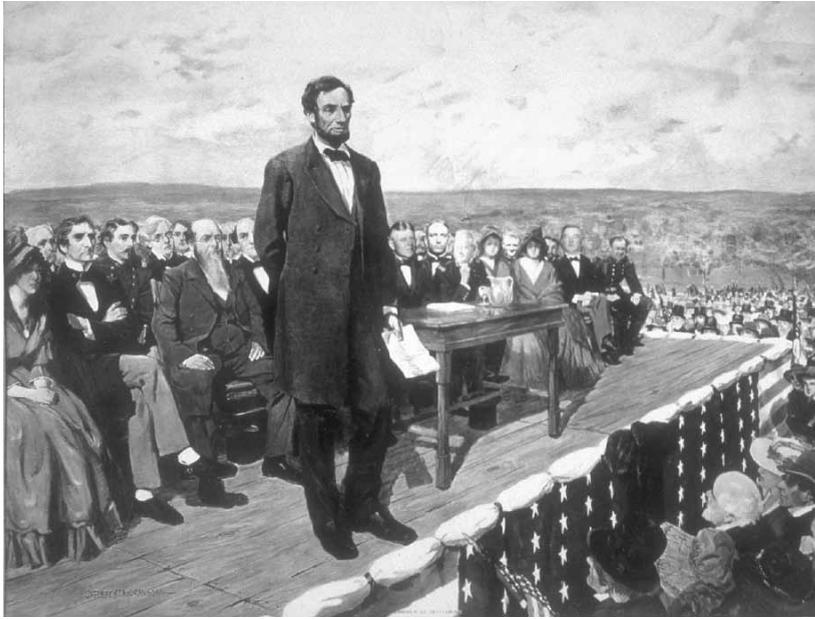


Harper's Weekly

Ulysses Grant receives his commission as Lieutenant-General from President Lincoln, March 9, 1864.

There are those who are dissatisfied with me. To such I would say: You desire peace, and you blame me that we do not have it. But how can we attain it? There are but three conceivable ways: First—to suppress the Rebellion by force of arms. This I am trying to do. Are you for it? If you are, so far we are agreed. If you are not for it, a second way is to give up the Union. I am against this. Are you for it? If you are, you should say so plainly. If you are not for force, or yet for dissolution, there only remains some imaginable compromise.

I do not believe that any compromise embracing the maintenance of the Union is now possible. All that I learn leads to a directly opposite belief. The strength of the Rebellion is



Fletcher C. Cransom

“Lincoln’s use of the ironic juxtaposition of the universal and the particular; the historic mission vs. the moment, forces a reflection in the audience that is polemical, but at the same time elevating.” Here, President Lincoln speaks at the dedication of the Gettysburg National Cemetery on November 19, 1863.

its military, its army. That army dominates all the country, and all the people within its range....

You dislike the Emancipation Proclamation, and perhaps would have it retracted. You say it is unconstitutional. I think differently. I think the Constitution invests its Commander-in-Chief with the law of war in time of war. The most that can be said, if so much, is, that slaves are property. Is there, has there ever been, any question that by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed? And is it not needed whenever it helps us and hurts the enemy? Armies, the world over, destroy enemies’ property when they can not use it; and even destroy their own to keep it from the enemy. Civilized belligerents do all in their power to help themselves or hurt the enemy, except a few things regarded as barbarous or cruel. Among the exceptions are the massacre of vanquished foes and non-combatants, male and female.

But the Proclamation, as law, either is valid or is not valid. If it is not valid it needs no retraction. If it is valid it can not be retracted, any

more than the dead can be brought to life. Some of you profess to think its retraction would operate favorably for the Union....

You say that you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but no matter. Fight you then, exclusively, to save the Union. I issued the Proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union.

Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time then for you to declare you will not fight to free negroes. I thought that in your struggle for the Union to whatever extent the negroes should cease helping the enemy, to that extent it weakened the enemy in his resistance to you. Do you think differently? I thought that whatever negroes can be got to do as

soldiers leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do in saving the Union. Does it appear otherwise to you? But negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest motive, even the promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept.

Peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon and come to stay; and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time. It will then have been proved that among freemen there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and that they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case and pay the cost. And then there will be some black men who can remember that with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this great consummation, while I fear there will be some white ones unable to forget that with malignant heart and deceitful speech they have striven to hinder it.

Still, let us not be over-sanguine of a speedy,



Alexander Gardner

"With malice toward none; with charity for all ... let us do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations." —from Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865.

final triumph. Let us be quite sober. Let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in His own good time, will give us the rightful result.

Yours, very truly, A. LINCOLN.

Not Debate, Irony

Lincoln does not debate, but ironizes. Who are you, he asks. What is your humanity that you would not recognize the one who fights beside you? He asks them to elevate beyond their prejudices, if not for the slave, for their nation.

Lincoln's use of the ironic juxtaposition of the universal and the particular, the historic mission versus the moment in time, forces a reflection in the audience that is polemical but at the same time elevating. He is aware of the mortality and limits of the individual versus the human commitment to future generations.³

Based on this quality of irony which is constant throughout, Lincoln develops the best and most poetic of his features. Besides the Gettysburg Address, this is best seen in his Second Inaugural, well known but not as well understood. With victory in hand, but the task of reconstruction, reconciliation and development before

him, Lincoln abjures triumphalism. Rather he eerily evokes the universal, that providence that commends the Union victor not only to mercy, but to the humility of knowing the North was complicit in the failure that led to war, slavery, the giving up of the American system, and must not now destroy the nation by failing at reconstruction:

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, urgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the

Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding.

Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing

3. *EIR*, January 9, 2009, page 79.

their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged.

The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Reconciliation, 'With All Nations'

A month later, four days before his assassination, Lincoln applied this reconciliation to the case of Louisiana. In the Second Inaugural, he challenged the victor above all, and that irony allows him to invoke the power of the Creator of the universe. The same power that Shelley invokes, allows Lincoln to lead the nation, in effect to make the population better than it knew itself. The United States was to be a Republic in which each individual's creative potential could be fulfilled, and thus to pursue one's happiness. The full mission of the United States was underlined in the final words: "and with all nations."

Lincoln calls for the nation to be united, in mercy, but from a higher standpoint, to recognize the change and fulfillment of the nation that the war and emancipation had wrought.

In contrast, the Confederate sympathizers with the British imperial outlook turned to the romanticism of The Lost Cause, the hatred of not only the North, but of science and technology, the which Lincoln had championed. Lincoln personified the enemy of that empire.

Lincoln was conscious, as he expresses in his Second Inaugural, that there was a power through the ages that reached through generations which he was conducting, to both save and uplift the nation. He developed the power of irony and humor to communicate and polemicize with the population.

This is the unseen power in Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," which begins with this stanza:

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us,—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain
 shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
Like memory of music fled,—
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Probably one of the great examples of this, but much longer, is "Mont Blanc," virtually a kind of hymn to this concept of the physical universe and the relationship to the cognitive in the human individual. Here is the first stanza and part of the second:

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting
 gloom—
Now lending splendor, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters—with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap forever,

Mere woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine⁴—
Thou many-colored, many-voicéd vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the
 flame
Of lightning through the tempest; ...

The end of the concluding stanza may give a better idea:

... The secret Strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of Heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

The power itself comes from the irony that leads one to understand creativity. Lincoln's life, his political leadership, his statecraft, was his work of art, his greatest poem. And so it is with all great lawgivers, the truly few, who have been of that quality, are poets, classical artists above all.

The Greatest Mission

What gave Lincoln that power was, first, his understanding of the great mission of the United States, to be the first true Republic, having escaped the oligarchy of Europe.⁵ He understood the Constitution from that standpoint, which was the written form of universal principle. At the time he foresaw, that the deviation from that mission in the form of submission to British free trade policies, which

4. A reference to the ravine through which flows the River Arve. —Editor's note.

5. Once an Austrian count applied for a position in the Union Army, stressing his family honor and ancestry and repeatedly reminding the President, that he held the high title of count. Taking his application, Lincoln patted the man on the shoulder sympathetically and said, "Never mind, don't you worry, you shall be treated with just as much consideration. I will see to it that your bearing a title shan't be held against you."

meant expanding slavery, had brought the United States to an inevitable doom. Lincoln acted to create a movement to restore the Union to its mission, and to cut the knot of slavery.

Lincoln knew that the issue was to create a future for this nation, and this is the source of his creativity, which we see in both his humor and his irony. He is able to do this, because he sees the failings from a standpoint outside the present. His idea of these principles is expressed in the poetry, through which he educated and led the country. Lincoln is the legislator as humorist, ironist, and poet. He uses this to provoke the citizenry to be better than itself, to rise to those laws of nature, which create the ability of man to act and improve himself and his society, which is the power of which Shelley speaks. Lincoln's leadership guides others to their immortality.

When Lincoln died, Edward Stanton, the Secretary of War, who only came to revere Lincoln in the course of their joint struggle in the civil war, said, "Now he is for the ages." And so he is for our age—one who lives within us, if we choose so to celebrate him.

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