

**201010 OBITER DICTA: SAVANNAH IN MARCH 2010**  
**Steven Alan Samson**

**Sunday, March 14**

I started reading *The Geography of Good and Evil* by Andreas Kinneging on the trip to Savannah. This may be a book I can use in class and become the basis for developing a program for education in statesmanship.

**Monday 15**

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/us\\_social\\_security\\_iou](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/us_social_security_iou)

I am hoping that this Congress will have the good sense to back off the Senate health care bill and recognize, at last, that it is time to focus on basics. As serious a problem as health care is, the current approach - simply to start nationalizing the system - will only further add to our IOUs. As Andreas Kinneging writes in the opening sentence of *The Geography of Good and Evil*: "In the modern Western world superficiality marks public discourse on various momentous topics."

Speaking of the treaty constitution that became the Treaty of Lisbon, Kinneging says: "Those who are unaware of and unfamiliar with the basic principles of limited government, the separation of powers, checks and balances, and representative democracy, who are unaware of the momentous questions these doctrines address and resolve, will make a mess of constitutional law and create an abominable constitution that, if left to its devices, will produce chaos or repression or both." He blames the frenetic pace of modern life that has destroyed leisure, but I would also fault the superficiality of an educational system that focuses less on intellectual mastery and moral inculcation than on socialization and on group dynamics.

In the intellectual professions as well as in national life generally, we have backed our way into a system that has escaped the human scale in the positive sense but that remains ever subject to the human factor in the negative. The need to decentralize our entire financial and political system is something urgent that cannot be delayed indefinitely. The gravy train has been derailed and the gravy has spilled all over the track.

Another dimension of our problem is that we are losing our critical faculties for want of exercise. As Kinneging notes: "Today, except in a few stalwart publications, investigative journalism is as good as dead. There simply is not enough time." I was shocked to read on the DEBKA site this morning that the convoy of Nouri al-Maliki was attacked four days ago, that a bomb hit his vehicle, and that he may have been seriously injured. I do not believe there has been any word in the press to date. The site even suggested that Ayad Allawi may become the new prime minister. Can such a news blackout be maintained where there is a genuine freedom of the press?

<http://pajamasmedia.com/blog/free-speech-loophole-threatens-american-writers/?singlepage=true>

Rachel Ehrenfeld, who wrote *Funding Evil*, had a libel suit lodged against her in a Britain years ago. But her situation is far from unique. Back in the 1990s I attended a conference where I met Count Nikolai Tolstoy, who had had a similar experience with his book, *The Minister and the Massacres*. In the case of another book on terrorist funding, *Alms for Jihad*, a similar libel suit led Cambridge University Press to destroy the remaining stocks of its book, recall all copies from British libraries, and proceed to attack the authors. Attached below is a justification by a spokesman for the publisher, followed by a subsequent review in the *New York Times*, which examined the larger picture.

<http://www.thebookseller.com/blogs/43397-why-cup-acted-responsibly.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/books/review/Donadio-t.html?ex=1350532800&en=a46a9c67602861ee&ei=5124&partner=permalink&exprod=permalink>

## Tuesday 16

[http://townhall.com/columnists/FrankGaffney/2010/03/15/the\\_anti-fascist?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/FrankGaffney/2010/03/15/the_anti-fascist?page=full&comments=true)

Frank Gaffney counsels various friends of liberty to cut Geert Wilders some slack. In making a frontal attack on the "Red-Green axis" that unites secular Leftists with radical Islamists, Wilders has become a political lightning rod for his opposition to the creeping Islamization of Europe.

Having known one such lightning rod, Edward Rozek, who was persecuted for his opposition to what Sidney Hook called "totalitarian liberalism" on campus, I believe I can readily detect the signs of a political lynching, which often includes a show trial. It will be remarkable if Wilders escapes the fate of a designated scapegoat but, like it or not, the times have summoned him to be the West's designated champion. It reminds me to Nathaniel Hawthorne's wonderful short story, "The Gray Champion."

In the meantime, Wilders is enjoying some successes in the interim. Prohibited from flying into Britain last year, he has now been able to address the British House of Lords. Some in the Labour Party, by the way, now intend to abolish the very half of today's Parliament with which that institution began in 1258, more than seven and a half centuries ago.

If Britain would abolish the Lords, it would only be another step toward putting itself out of business. C. S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength* remains hideously prophetic. As Kenneth Minogue has noted: The State originated as an association of independent disposers of their own resources. Such a state, composed of masterful characters, could not turn into a despotism because the individual had the right to dispose of his own property rather than be made an instrument of someone else's project. But this is exactly what would be snuffed out: whether it would be by the "general will" of Eurocratic socialists or by the technocrats of N.I.C.E. makes no real difference.

Part of the problem, then, is Britain's -- and Europe's -- own susceptibility to totalitarian liberalism. As Gaffney notes, Wilders "calls for Europe to adopt something akin to the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment - hardly the stuff of fascism. He proudly and correctly declares the West's tolerant, freedom-rooted culture as superior to that of totalitarian Shariah Islam.

"Mr. Wilders also seeks an end to mass immigration from Islamic countries, expulsion of criminal immigrants and a halt to further construction of mosques. Clearly, in some quarters, these are seen as controversial proposals. But they reflect a harsh demographic reality: Failure to take such steps will inevitably condemn free societies like the Netherlands to submission at the hands of swelling numbers of Shariah-adherent Muslims.

"Geert Wilders' courage in standing up to the Red-Green axis and its shared agenda of destroying Western civilization has made him the man of the hour in his country. Even as he is being prosecuted by his government for exercising free speech, his commitment to protecting it and other liberties has made his Freedom Party the most popular in parts of the Netherlands - and given him a good shot at becoming the next Dutch prime minister in elections to be held there in June."

<http://www.globalpolitician.com/26302-foreign-policy-israel>

Barry Rubin dissects the Obama Administration approach to "jump-starting" peace talks. First, beat up the Israelis and then, when that doesn't get the PA to the bargaining table, beat up the Israelis.

"The PA makes President Barack Obama look foolish by destroying his September 2009 initiative saying there would be talks within two months. The PA broke its promise to Obama not to sponsor the Goldstone report. In the end, the PA still won't talk directly. Yet during fourteen months in office the Obama administration has not criticized the PA once. The point is clear: The U.S. government will never criticize the PA no matter what it does."

As the saying goes: With friends like these, who needs enemies? On the other hand, being an enemy of America seems to pay greater dividends these days than being a friend.

## **Wednesday 17**

[http://townhall.com/columnists/DavidHarsanyi/2010/03/17/why\\_are\\_we\\_still\\_bowing?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/DavidHarsanyi/2010/03/17/why_are_we_still_bowing?page=full&comments=true)

This is a reminder of the "realities on the ground" in the West Bank that this presidency is endorsing. It is probably a good time to dust off Thucydides and remind ourselves what happens when hubristic leaders boast of their greatness (like Pericles), betray their allies, force neutrals to choose sides, rashly sweep aside all opposition, and then bring charges against their commanders in the field - all like the Athenian assembly.

Has anyone noticed that the Washington Tidal Basin is becoming a sinkhole of corruption? That today's political establishment knows only how to build

monuments to its vanity while our national infrastructure is going the way of Detroit? Percy Shelley understood the consequences very well in his poem "Ozymandias":

". . . Round the decay/Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare/The lone and level sands stretch far away."

[http://townhall.com/columnists/MichaelMedved/2010/03/17/why\\_didn%e2%80%99t\\_obama\\_wreck\\_the\\_economy\\_when\\_he\\_had\\_the\\_chance?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/MichaelMedved/2010/03/17/why_didn%e2%80%99t_obama_wreck_the_economy_when_he_had_the_chance?page=full&comments=true)

Michael Medved throws cold water on the feverish conspiracy mongers. We should remember the damage done by "the best and the brightest" of an earlier generation if we wish to understand what is happening before our very eyes. It is déjà vu all over again.

What is to be done? "We stand a better chance of defeating Obama's schemes, and restoring the free market system, if we resist his policies as sincerely but disastrously misguided, not willfully and suicidally destructive."

<http://pajamasmedia.com/victordavishanson/reflections-on-the-revolution-in-america/?singlepage=true>

"These are exciting though scary revolutionary times, akin to the constant acrimony in the fifth-century BC polis, mid-nineteenth century revolutionary Europe, or – perhaps in a geriatric replay – the 1960s."

Victor Davis Hanson has already dusted off his Thucydides, along with Tocqueville and Eric Hoffer.

Behold our ruling class! Read and weep! "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Now that we have made our bed, we must lie in it. We wished upon a star and now that we have gotten what we wished and voted for, it is now only a matter of days before the bill is presented and the day of reckoning is at hand. We are presently being fitted for a new suit. We may soon enough be forced to lie in it.

[http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/03/graph\\_of\\_the\\_day\\_for\\_march\\_17.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/03/graph_of_the_day_for_march_17.html)

It just so happens that I am reading a section on the European Union in Saul Cohen's *Geopolitics*. The Irish miracle, as so graphically illustrated here, is certainly something to celebrate. Unfortunately, Paul Krugman's "worst-case scenario" is a "no case scenario" under this tax-and-tax-and-tax-again Administration. Note Ireland's crippling tax rate and public debt in the 1980s as compared with today. The spirit of Maggie Thatcher must have descended upon Dublin.

Is this the "luck of the Irish?" We Americans should be so "lucky." It takes hard-driving determination to turn a failing economy around as the Irish have done. Yes, membership in the European Union helped Ireland get its fiscal house in order, but the Irish should be careful that the EU doesn't become a

straitjacket. And yes we can, but the fault, as always, lies neither in our stars nor in our "un-lucky charms."

<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/spengler/2010/03/12/how-about-a-self-portrait/>

The perfect squelch for a sick "artist."

## Thursday 18

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2010/03/what-obama-is-actually-trying-to-do-in-israel/37548/>

Here is an explanation (and perhaps an endorsement) of the tactics being used to force a change of direction or a regime change on Israel.

## Saturday 20

[http://townhall.com/columnists/FloydandMaryBethBrown/2010/03/19/sen\\_reid\\_caught\\_red-handed?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/FloydandMaryBethBrown/2010/03/19/sen_reid_caught_red-handed?page=full&comments=true)

The American press does not cover the radical agenda of the Progressive Democrats, but the role of such enablers as Sen. Harry Reid is just as important to expose. Like the Copenhagen climate change treaty, the health care bill is also a monstrosity of a Trojan Horse, but it has a strong chance of crossing the next threshold within the next few days. Climategate helped derail the first of these menaces to our fiscal health and political liberty. What will it take to drive a stake through the heart of the second?

[http://townhall.com/columnists/DavidHarsanyi/2010/03/19/actually,\\_process\\_does\\_matter?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/DavidHarsanyi/2010/03/19/actually,_process_does_matter?page=full&comments=true)

David Harsanyi here critiques the legislative process being used to ram through the health care legislation. "Actually, in the case of health care legislation, the ugly substance of the legislation creates the ugly process. The two issues are inseparable."

All of this reminds me of one of my favorite book titles: *What Makes You Think We Read the Bills?*

[http://townhall.com/columnists/DickMorrisandEileenMcGann/2010/03/20/if\\_obamacare\\_passes,\\_what\\_will\\_happen\\_by\\_election\\_day?page=full&comments=true](http://townhall.com/columnists/DickMorrisandEileenMcGann/2010/03/20/if_obamacare_passes,_what_will_happen_by_election_day?page=full&comments=true)

Dick Morris summarizes the political risks for the Democrats and the medical stakes for those on Medicare. Those who live in major metropolitan areas are the likely to be the most at risk.

<http://article.nationalreview.com/print/?q=NjY0ZjJhZGMzMGIxYzRjMzVkNTJlYmJhYzQ0YmJlOGQ=>

Charles Krauthammer details the Administration's manufactured crisis with Israel. But Hillary Clinton just got a taste of her own medicine on a visit to Russia.

The message: drop dead! Russia will continue to promote the Iranian nuclear program while the United States seeks to stop Israel from attacking it.

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/beware\\_the\\_expert.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/beware_the_expert.html)

Daniel Fernald warns us to "Beware the Expert." As we watch how the sausage is being made in Washington, DC, we should consider whether we wish to entrust our lives and well-being to such a process.

I read several books by Jacques Ellul in the 1970s. As Fernald notes: "In *The Technological Society*, Ellul discusses at length what he calls 'technique' -- i.e., the social, political, and economic uses to which science and technology are put.

"'Technique' aims to find 'the one best means' of performing whatever the task at hand may be. This is the factory method of Henry Ford applied to politics and society. 'If there is one best means of making a car,' the reasoning goes, then 'there must also be one best means of ruling a people.'"

This was the thinking behind a movement known as "Technocracy," which originated in the 1930s, as did so many other utopian schemes. Major economic crises seem to inspire a considerable amount of magical thinking.

Fernald continues: "This thinking is reflected in the cult of the expert, perhaps best exemplified by Woodrow Wilson's exaltation of abstract academic theories over common sense and experience. Wilson often bemoaned what he considered the less-than-salutary restrictions placed on the implementation of the ideas of 'experts.' Democracy was so inconvenient. Why should the elite have to bother explaining themselves to those hick yokels, who are neither intelligent nor enlightened enough to understand the wisdom of their betters?"

The Progressive mindset and its cult of the expert dates back at least to Francis Bacon. Both the mindset and the cult are now well-entrenched in the academy and the bureaucracy. But virtually from the beginning, the image of the savior in a lab coat shared the spotlight with darker visions, such as *Dr. Faustus*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. We appear to have a natural fear of a tyranny, as Alain Finkielkraut puts it, done "in the name of humanity." If we destroy the laws that safeguard us against tyrants, how then should we live and prosper?

Yoram Hazony describes the problem as the Amalek in our midst:

"Amalek's wrong is in its insistence on savaging those least capable to defending themselves -- for the pleasure in it, or because it is the least strenuous method of asserting Amalekite control and bringing Jewish military power to its knees." One modern Amalekite, Vladimir Lenin, held that it did not matter if three-quarters of the world perished so long as the remaining quarter came under Communism. "What Amalek represents is the oldest position in moral philosophy: The denial that, on balance, there is anything to fear about any moral line which might be drawn, since it is strict adherence to evident personal or political interest that rewards most handsomely -- the thesis that 'crime pays.'"

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/chris\\_christies\\_new\\_jersey\\_rev.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/chris_christies_new_jersey_rev.html)

We need more leaders like Chris Christie who will tell us the truth that "There Ain't No Such Thing as a Free Lunch" (TANSTAAFL). Politicians and government employees may think it that whatever comes from the taxpayers is all gravy, but the taxpayers have been repeatedly stuck with the bill. As a result, New Jersey is one of several states - New York, California, Nevada - that have been bleeding taxpayers.

If Ireland can turn its ship around (see Wednesday 17), so can New Jersey. So can the United States. But first the deck must be thoroughly swabbed, crew and all, in a vigorous Spring cleaning.

[http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/obama\\_is\\_a\\_stranger\\_in\\_a\\_stran.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/03/obama_is_a_stranger_in_a_stran.html)

Robin of Berkeley, a psychotherapist, offers a diagnosis: the president has an attachment disorder. Something of this sort has been observed virtually from the start of his campaign, but it is becoming a touchstone for understanding his peculiar fixation on a piece of legislation that is tearing the country apart and may destroy his party's control over the government. The hubris inspired by Bill Clinton's electoral victory in 1992 (in a three-way race) was followed by nemesis in 1994 and then by Republican hubris in 1995 and Clinton's reelection in 1996. The election of 2010 may very well be an encore of 1994. Let us hope that Republican blundering does not set up the country for a repeat of 1995 and 1996.

## Sunday 21

Headline for a video clip of Congressman Alcee Hastings at the *Drudge Report* site, March 21, 2010: Dem Chair: 'There Ain't No Rules Here . . . We Make 'Em Up As We Go Along' . . .

From a column by John Peeples on the *American Thinker* site, March 21, 2010:

"The True Gentleman is the man whose conduct proceeds from good will and an acute sense of propriety, and whose self-control is equal to all emergencies; who does not make the poor man conscious of his poverty, the obscure man of his obscurity, or any man of his inferiority or deformity; who is himself humbled if necessity compels him to humble another; who does not flatter wealth, cringe before power, or boast of his own possessions or achievements; who speaks with frankness but always with sincerity and sympathy; whose deed follows his word; who thinks of the rights and feelings of others, rather than his own; and who appears well in any company, a man with whom honor is sacred and virtue safe."

John Walter Wayland (circa 1899)

<http://www.debka.com/article/8665/>

If the president withholds bunker-busters from Israel, will Israel go nuclear?

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/21/opinion/21friedman.html?ref=opinion>

If anyone wishes to have a quick snapshot of the failure of the American education system and get a sense of the larger social, cultural, and demographic picture, Thomas Friedman's column is a good place to start. The failure of American education (in its larger sense as a complete cultural enterprise) is only implicit in this celebration of academic excellence by the children of immigrants.

America has two choices: either import the talent or cultivate the talent at home. It can and should do both. But however it chooses, it will still face other challenges, including what would happen if and when our country can no longer attract the best and the brightest through the global "brain drain." And, by the way, that brain drain is one of the quarrels that other countries already have with America.

Importing the talent seems to have become the default position, both for better and for worse. Even if we take this lesson to heart, it should then be supplemented by a careful and sobering reading of the summary (below) of *The Graying of the Great Powers* to understand what is at stake during the next very few decades.

[http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/080630\\_gai\\_majorfindings.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/isis/pubs/080630_gai_majorfindings.pdf)

How are we going to secure the West once it shrinks into islands of prosperity in a roiling sea of political instability and communal violence? The utopian fantasies of American Democrats with their national health care fix are not going to keep the wolf from the door. America will quickly face a medical brain drain of its own: yet another self-inflicted wound of a welfare state that has been going to seed.

Unless the developing world can create jobs for their own citizens, more countries will join the ranks of hollowed-out state failures, the surge of immigration into the West will include fewer of the "best and brightest," and there will be no security for even the developed countries, whose economic and military resources will be taxed far beyond their capacity.

During the half century of the Barracks Emperors, Rome saw the rise and fall of three dozen emperors: only one of whom apparently was not deposed and/or murdered. By then, it had become more of a global corporation held in thrall by mercenary armies than a country secured by the loyalty of a self-governing citizenry.

[http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/03/house\\_passes\\_obamacare\\_1.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/03/house_passes_obamacare_1.html)

As Samuel Johnson put it: "Marry in haste, repent at leisure." Now the health care bill goes to the president for his signature. Unless it is declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, the new health care plan is virtually untouchable until 2013 when most of its benefits are supposed to kick in. The political chicanery implicit in this sleight off the hand was part of the plan all along.

A Republican Congress in 2011 will be largely helpless to do more than mitigate the damage. A second term for Obama would make the program virtually untouchable.