

**The Special Saturday Night Dinner:
Richard Weaver, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, and The Philadelphia Society**

It is our pleasure to co-host with The Intercollegiate Studies Institute the special dinner on Saturday night honoring the recipients of Richard Weaver Fellowships. ISI has been granting Weaver Fellowships to top young scholars in graduate school since 1964.

The topic for discussion this weekend is inspired by the work of Richard M. Weaver. His books include amongst others, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, *Ideas Have Consequences*, and *Visions of Order*. They were seminal in the creation of an intellectual conservative movement.

The links between Weaver, ISI, and The Philadelphia Society go back a long way. Richard Weaver was not only Vic Milione's favorite conservative, but he was a very loyal member of the ISI Board of Trustees. Weaver published many of his ISI lectures as contributions to their early publications. Henry Regnery, President of The Philadelphia Society from 1971-73, published *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, and Al Regnery, his son, is currently on the Board of Trustees of both ISI and The Philadelphia Society. ISI recently republished *Visions of Order* with a new introduction by Ted Smith.

The Saturday night dinner will feature Stan Evans, a long-time member of the Board of Trustees of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. The title of his speech, *Richard Weaver and the Brotherhood of the Book*, describes exactly Weaver's insistence on the primacy of unshakeable books. Stan personally knew Richard Weaver back in the early days of ISI and was present at the 1960 Board Meeting in Indianapolis. He also helped Don Lipsett organize the famous Brown County, Indiana, conference with speakers, Milton Friedman, Frank Meyer, and Richard Weaver. Weaver's speech, "Conservatism and Libertarianism: The Common Ground," originally appeared in ISI's *The Individualist* (May 1960) and was reprinted in *Life Without Prejudice and Other Essays* (Henry Regnery, 1965, Introduction by stalwart Philadelphia Society member, Eliseo Vivas. Stan is a past President and Distinguished Member of The Philadelphia Society.

At the cocktail reception preceding the dinner, we are inducting Edwin J. Feulner, President of the Heritage Foundation, into the Distinguished Member ranks. Ed was one of the Founding Fathers of The Philadelphia Society who worked closely with Don Lipsett, Bill Buckley, and Milton Friedman. He was also one of the earliest recipients of a Weaver Fellowship. Ed has written about Weaver in his Presidential Essay of 1987, reprinted in *The March of Freedom: Modern Classics in Conservative Thought* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation: 2003).

Alas, since Richard Weaver died in 1963, he was never a member of The Philadelphia Society—although there are many who maintain an oral tradition of Weaver speaking at early meetings! If it is not true in fact, it is true in substance.

Richard Weaver's books and essays are still relevant today. The rhetoric of President Obama and his campaign mode are captured in his essay, "Reflections of Modernity"

with the pithy statement, “The first feature of modernity that strikes one who keeps his eyes and ears open is the ceaseless talk of crisis. Everywhere it is being said that ‘we live in an age of crisis.’ We hear this until we begin to weary of the term itself...” (*Life Without Prejudice and Other Essays*, p. 99). The conservative, he later argues in the same essay, is one who starts from the nature of man. “He is disturbed when he hears from the other side only that this is a changing world and that we ought to be prepared to change with it. Change in itself cannot be a meaningful principle of ordering.” (p. 104)

On the title page of *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, Richard Weaver quotes Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, “Thus it happens that rhetoric is an offshoot of dialectic and also of ethical studies.” On the last page, Weaver emphasizes that, “An ethics of rhetoric requires that ultimate terms be ultimate in some rational sense. The only way to achieve that objective is through an ordering of our own minds and our own passions....Perhaps the best that any of us can do is to hold a dialectic with himself to see what the wider circumference of his terms of persuasion are. This process will not only improve the consistency of one’s thinking but it will also, if the foregoing analysis is sound, prevent his becoming a creature of evil public forces and a victim of his own thoughtless rhetoric.” (*The Ethics of Rhetoric*, p. 232)

Rhetoric is grounded in rational thought and the pursuit of truth. The various panels that we have chosen reflect different aspects of Weaver’s many books. The first panel draws from the prescient observation in his book, *Ideas Have Consequences*: “So journalism becomes a monstrous discourse of Protagoras, which charms by hypnotizing and thwarts that participation without which one is not a thinking man. If our newspaper reader were trained to look for assumptions, if he were conscious of the rhetoric in lively reporting, we might not fear this product of the printer’s art; but that would be to grant that he is educated. As the modern world is organized, the ordinary reader seems to lose means of private judgment, and the decay of conversation has about destroyed the practice of dialectic. Consequently the habit of credulity grows.” p. 97

In an article on “Lee the Philosopher” Weaver quotes Robert E. Lee: “At present, the public mind is not prepared to receive the truth.” (Letter to Jubal Early, 1866). Weaver goes on to explain that, “This statement represented a settled conviction, which he reiterated on numerous occasions....Certainly it denies the principle that the voice of the people is at all times the voice of God. It declares that the mind of a people, like that of an individual, may become so deranged with anger that it is simply not receptive to the realities. Because this psychopathic mentality cannot interpret objectively, it does not want to hear reason and may be offended by a proposal in proportion as it is reasonable. People must be in a state of grace to listen to the truth, more especially when it comes as a remonstrance.”

Later in the article, Weaver affirms the similarity of Lee’s vision to that of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address and the Gettysburg Address. They both invoke the “healing spirit of charity...and the underlying thought is redemption.” Richard Weaver, “Lee the Philosopher” *The Georgia Review*, Fall 1948, reprinted in *The Southern Essays of*

Richard M. Weaver, ed. George M. Curtis, III, and James J. Thompson, Jr., Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1987.

Further Material on Richard Weaver

Further information and pictures can be found in Lee Edwards' *Educating for Liberty: The First Half-Century of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute* (Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003). Included in the book are pictures of Richard Weaver, Albert Campbell, another Distinguished Member of The Philadelphia Society, and another old friend of The Philadelphia Society, Louis Dehmlow. Louis served both on the Board of Trustees of ISI and The Philadelphia Society from 1971-73, and 1987-89.

We making available on the Internet Richard Weaver's "Rhetorical Strategies of the Conservative Cause." The speech is in two parts and the total is 65 minutes of MP3 files. The address was given as an ISI address at the University of Wisconsin on April 26, 1959 and also later. The man responsible for the tape was the founder of The Philadelphia Society, Don Lipsett, then the Midwestern Director of ISI, who worked closely with Richard Weaver, Stan Evans, Al Campbell, Vic Milione, Ed Feulner, and Louis Dehmlow.

For Streaming Audio Versions:

<http://phillysoc.org/WeaverCauseOne.m3u>

<http://phillysoc.org/WeaverCauseTwo.m3u>

For Itunes or MP3 use to listen to:

<http://phillysoc.org/WeaverCauseOne.mp3>

<http://phillysoc.org/WeaverCauseTwo.mp3>

The speech is important because it shows a Richard Weaver much closer to the fusionist position of respect for free markets than his previous rhetoric had indicated. George Nash brilliantly analyzes Weaver's "developing reorientation" and "remarkable reversal." The new theme in this speech was "his rousing defense of the American economic system." For a full development, read George Nash's, "The Influence of *Ideas Have Consequences* on the Conservative Intellectual Movement in America" in Ted J. Smith III, *Steps Toward Restoration: The Consequences of Richard Weaver's Ideas*, ISI Books, 1998. This book also contains amongst other contributions by our members, Ted J. Smith's "Preface" and "How *Ideas Have Consequences* Came to be Written" and "The Legacy of Richard Weaver" by M. Stanton Evans.

<http://www.isi.org/books/bookdetail.aspx?id=c64e70c7-5831-45a6-b57e-142764a34e8a>

Richard M. Weaver on the ISI Website:

ISI's web page devoted to the writings by and about Richard Weaver

<http://www.isi.org/search/search.aspx?SBY=Richard%20Weaver>

Philadelphia Society Members Writing About Richard Weaver in ISI publications:

Ted J. Smith III, *Steps Toward Restoration: The Consequences of Richard Weaver's Ideas*, ISI Books, 1998. This book contains amongst other contributions, "Preface" and "How *Ideas Have Consequences* Came to be Written" by Ted Smith; "The Influence of *Ideas Have Consequences* on the Conservative Intellectual Movement in America" by George Nash; and "The Legacy of Richard Weaver" by M. Stanton Evans.
<http://www.isi.org/books/bookdetail.aspx?id=c64e70c7-5831-45a6-b57e-142764a34e8a>

Willmoore Kendall "How to Read Richard Weaver: Philosopher of 'We the (Virtuous) People'" *Intercollegiate Review*, September 1965:
http://www.mmisi.org/ir/02_01/kendall.pdf

Henry Regnery, "Richard Weaver: A Southern Agrarian at the University of Chicago" *Modern Age*, Spring 1988, reprinted in *A Few Reasonable Words*, ISI, 1996:
http://www.mmisi.org/ma/32_02/regnery.pdf

Henry Regnery, "A Deceptive Title" review of Richard L. Johannsen, Rennard Trickland, Ralph T. Eubanks, eds., *Language Is Sermonic*, *Modern Age*, Fall 1971.
http://www.mmisi.org/ma/15_04/regnery.pdf

Joseph F. Johnston, Jr., "C.E.M. Joad, Richard Weaver and the Decline of Western Civilization" *Modern Age*, Summer 2002:
http://www.mmisi.org/ma/44_03/johnston.pdf

Jeffrey M. Gayner, "The Critique of Modernity in the Work of Richard M. Weaver" *Intercollegiate Review*, Spring 1979"
http://www.mmisi.org/ir/14_02/gayner.pdf