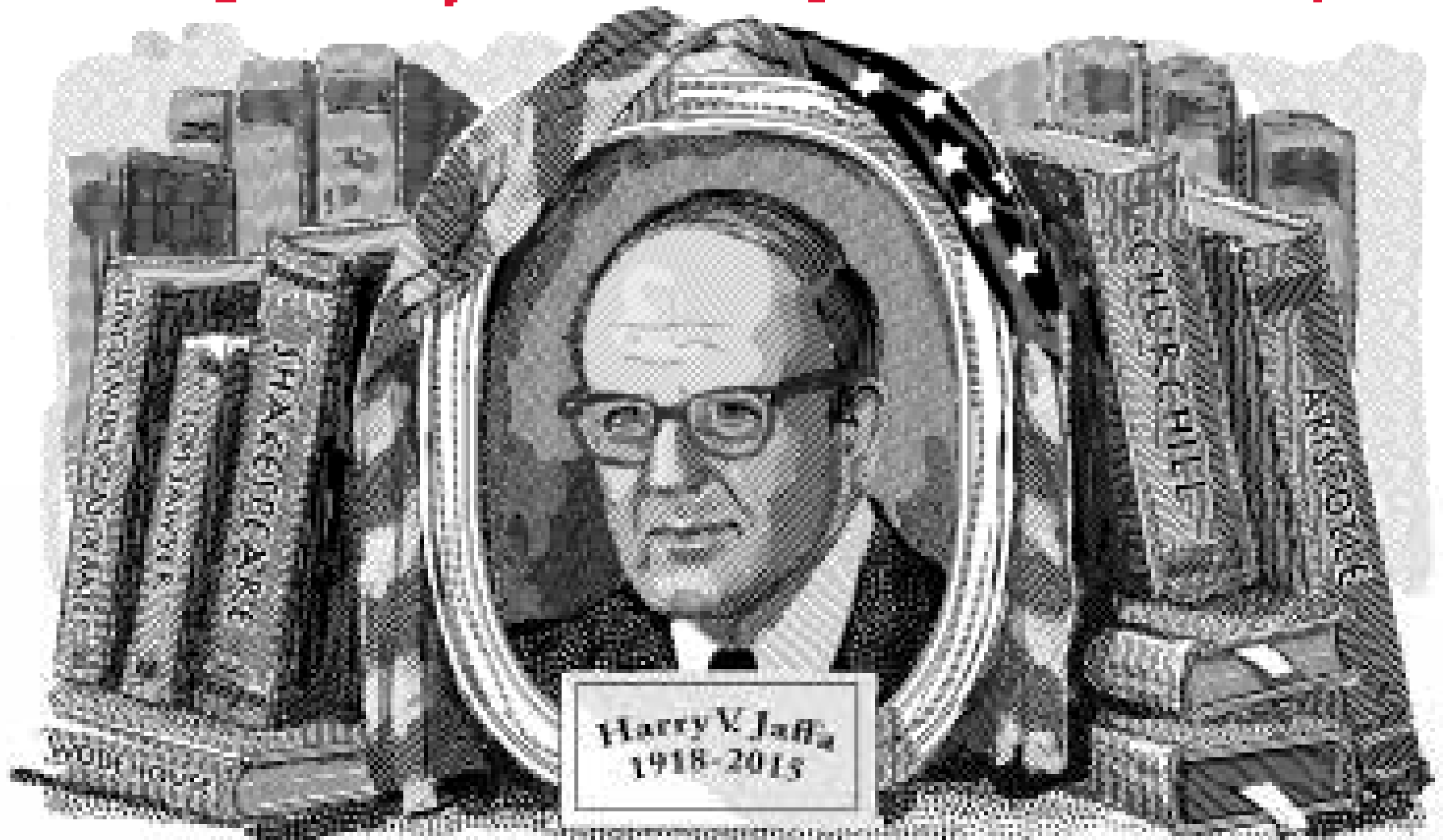


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SCOTT WALKER, UNPLUGGED

by Charles R. Kesler

FOR THE PAST FEW WEEKS GOVERNOR SCOTT WALKER OF WISCONSIN has had the unpleasant experience of running the gantlet of the American and British press. Do you believe in evolution, they asked him. What is President Obama's religion? Can a college dropout be a good president?

To these impertinent questions the governor granted only desultory replies. Liberals and conservatives alike have criticized him, not realizing that if he had answered more candidly and thoughtfully he would have been in even deeper trouble. The press, not to mention the political class in general, can be so ill-tempered and ill-educated that it forces intelligent politicians to hide their intelligence, like President Ronald Reagan in the famous *Saturday Night Live* skit, who, after a shambling, grandfatherly greeting to a visiting Girl Scout, immediately began barking orders to his staff, quoting Montesquieu, and speaking Arabic and German *am Telephon*.

Here is what I imagine the governor wanted to say, if only he had been on *Saturday Night Live* and not on the campaign trail surrounded by media hounds and political consultants. As a member of the press myself, I can't of course reveal my sources for this conjecture.

Reporter: Governor Walker, what religion is President Obama?

Walker: God only knows.

R: You mean you don't believe the president when he says he's a Christian?

W: Did you believe him when he used to say he was against gay marriage as a matter of "sacred principle," and in favor only of civil unions?

R: Well, his views evolved.

W: Yes, very conveniently, and that's one reason I'm skeptical of evolution. But my point is that, strictly speaking, only God really knows what is in the heart of any man. For ordinary purposes, though, I take a person at his word: his religion is whatever he says it is.

R: So you admit Obama is a Christian?

W: Yes, I understand it's a sacred principle with him.

R: What about evolution? You said you had to "punt" on that one. Are you afraid of offending the yahoos of the religious right?

W: Actually, the religious Americans I know are more like Houyhnhnms than Yahoos.

R: [Momentary silence.] Could you spell that for me?

W: You can look it up in *Gulliver's Travels*. That's a book. But never mind. I did say I had to punt on evolution, not because I wanted to

spare religious conservatives' feelings, though, but because I wanted to spare the reporter's. Can you imagine asking such a silly question?

R: By silly you mean hard?

W: I mean he didn't even distinguish between evolution within a species and evolution between species. He didn't wonder what it would mean to "believe" in a hypothesis. He didn't distinguish between evolution as a first or final cause, and evolution as an efficient cause. Above all, the question displayed the same credulous attitude towards science that Obama exhibits every time he proclaims that science has settled this question or that. Did it never occur to him that science is as much, or more, about unsettling than settling things?

R: You're evading the question.

W: I'm preparing to answer it. If by evolution you mean the materialist process which, by natural selection and a convenient sequence of physical accidents, has guided the development of life from the single-cell organism to the modern liberal intellectual, then no, I'm not buying it. And there are plenty of contemporary philosophers and natural scientists who don't, either. Some are proponents of intelligent design; others are not. Thomas Nagel, for example, emphatically in the latter camp, argues that such a materialist conception of nature is "almost certainly false."

R: Whoa, are you saying you don't believe in evolution?

W: I don't believe in "believing" in evolution. As an explanation of changes within species, evolution has a lot going for it. Even on a grander scale, as I pointed out in my later statement on the subject, evolution and belief in God are not incompatible.

R: How do you have time to read books by philosophers?

W: I don't. That's why I read the *Claremont Review of Books*.

R: So do you think a man with a high school education is qualified to be president?

W: That's a good one. I attended Marquette University for three and a half years and left to take a full-time job.

R: Your professor in a class on the politics of the Third World said you "seemed utterly bored."

W: I was, in *that* class. Have you ever taken a course on Third World politics?

R: But how can a man without a college degree possibly handle the job of president of the United States?

W: I dunno. Ask Abraham Lincoln.

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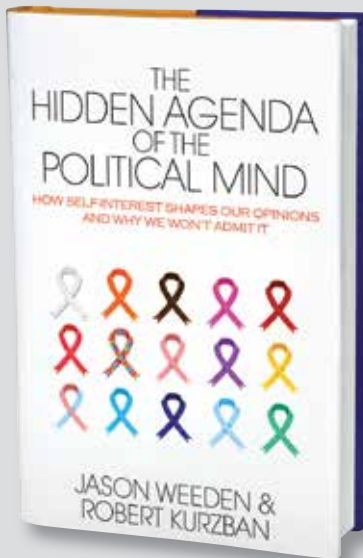
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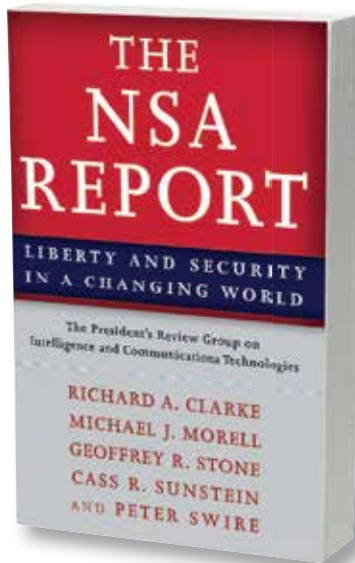
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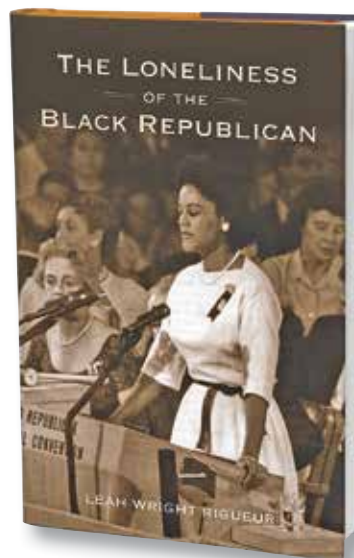
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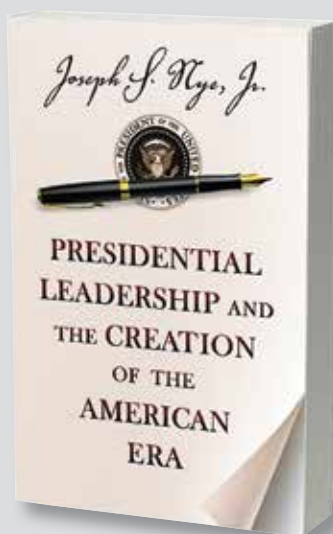
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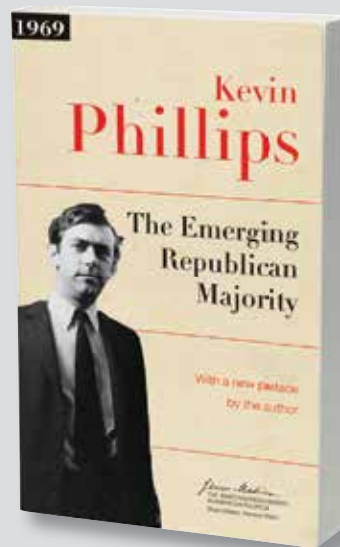
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