

Editor's Note: The Rise of Moral Choice

In a recent paper, "The Fall of the Dialectic and the Rise of Moral Choice" (*Society*, forthcoming), Robert J. Myers outlines a view of ethics and international affairs after the Cold War. The crutch of the dialectic, positing "progress" in history, is no longer relevant. On the left, the progression to equality guaranteed by Marx has been doomed by the failure of communism. On the right, the Hegelian notion of the "end of history" popularized recently by Francis Fukuyama seems more a note of Western triumphalism than a convincing explanation of events or an analytical tool for the future. Myers concludes that "...we have for too long searched for nostrums and automatic formulae to substitute for hard work and common sense. Our salvation has been in our hands for a very long time."

Often overlooked in the arsenal of analytical tools for students of international affairs is the basic idea of moral choice. "If there is a trend toward democracy," writes Myers, "one must be able to recognize real people who promote successfully real democratic policies and institutions." In this way of thinking, democracy develops and thrives not because of any inevitable historical or economic process but because of the choices and actions of citizens and leaders.

This volume of *Ethics & International Affairs* focuses on the theme of moral choice. The influence of anticommunist *raison d'état* in the West has gone the way of the Marxist-Leninist *raison d'état* of the East. Both are now finished, and their reflexive appeals to the "necessity" rationale for all policy decisions must now yield to more nuanced views and substantive analyses. The end of the Cold War opens up a new era of hard choices. It is imperative that these choices be informed by the great moral traditions that are our cultural heritage and by an understanding of our collective historical experience.

Some of the pieces included here emphasize the standards by which choices are made, including Kantian, utilitarian, and virtue ethics standards, as well as the role and resonance of international moral norms. Others emphasize the

historical trajectory of issues involving moral choice such as the international protection of human rights. The challenge, as always, is to relate the insights of philosophy and history to the problems of our own age. It is in this spirit and for this purpose that this volume is intended.