

## About the Author

### *A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Author*

Riley Nelson “Nellie” Hass was born in the heady days of Trudeau's last reign, during the late summer of 1981. He was the first of two children, though he would later become a middle child. His parents worked hard to become average middle class folk. His mother was born in Hamilton but grew up in the Toronto area. His father was born in Rochester, in northern New York state, but emigrated to Canada because of Nixon, that blackguard. Their backgrounds represented something of a northern European fusion as diluted by centuries of living in North America. His mother, a social worker, understandably leaned to the left of centre; his father, a business executive, understandably leaned to the right.

Hass first attended *Moms & Tots*, where he showed much early promise and this was early promise was solidified by further education at *Creative Corner*, where he excelled in all areas, leading to acceptance to the eminent *High Park Alternative* for kindergarten studies. However, Hass' parents were not content with this education and soon transferred him to the even more prestigious *Runnymede*, ostensibly so that their son could learn the French language. This rigorous factory of the leaders of tomorrow did have negative consequences, however, as it destroyed the young Hass' ambidexterity. From all accounts, Hass was as bright a prospect as the school had, being both intelligent and sociable. However, the ugly spectre of divorce soon cast its shadow over his life, as it has amongst so many families in the late twentieth century. The evil tides feminism and homosexuality had worked their devil's magic yet again as, at the age of six, Hass' parents separated (later divorced). Over the years, Hass would gain step-parents and step-siblings, and an even larger extended family than he had previously. If Vonnegut is right about extended families, then this may account for his perseverance.

An “alternative” approach for Hass was tried again, when he transferred to *H.A.S.S.* for senior school where he learned, much to his later chagrin, about the benefits of political correctness. After two years at *H.A.S.S.*, Hass graduated to high school, where he attended the supposedly illustrious *H.C.C.*, whose reputation was only that, a reputation.

It is clear from his journal, Hass did not believe he had much to say politically before high school, and it was high school where he first began to articulate his theories. From family, friends, and his own journal, we can construct his view of the world back then. Despite his parents being centrists, Hass somehow managed to take the extreme sides of their views, and his first political theories were paternalistic. He was on the harsher side of red toryism. He believed in a powerful state, with many interventionist policies, and he was a strong supporter of the death penalty. Though his mother had endeavoured to raise him in the United Church, Hass had evolved his own theory of a collective unconsciousness, derived from his lack of understanding of Jung's concept. Owing to Hass' alienation from his peers, this expressed itself in his belief that the “universe” acted to thwart the individual. How this meshed with his notion that the state should run everything is hard to imagine to us now. Presumably, it would be Hass, not his high school colleagues, who would hold power in this ideal state.

At seventeen, Hass fell in love, but she didn't feel the same. As a result, he decided to “get the hell out of Dodge,” as he crudely put it, and, against the judgment of his teachers, he went to school in small town Quebec, at *Bishop's University*. Though custom and ability should have dictated the *University of Toronto*, it turns out that *U of T's* reputation is a lot like that of *H.C.C.*, all smoke and no fire (at least at the undergraduate level). Before he arrived at *Bishop's*, he spent some time in England, where he met the first challenge to his authoritarian views in the form of a friend calling him out as an asshole (his journal records total shock and dismay at the event). His idea began to look a little thin.

All this time he had really been thinking more about history and movies than political theory. He spent his childhood reading history books, rather than playing with other kids. Eventually, he got to the point where he had memorized a lot of this history, and he needed something else to tickle his fancy. Then he found movies. His notes are littered with rapturous “reviews” of *Weekend, From Dusk Till Dawn*, the movies of Alex Cox, and anything else that defied conventions. Evidently he preferred the unconventional to real concerns like plot and character development. This was echoed in many of his unfinished screenplays, such as one about the PLO taking over an Austen-esque period piece in the

third act. Realizing he could never really become a director, he headed off to university in order to get a degree in history, and later teach.

He took a wide range of arts courses in his first year, and he discovered he wasn't learning very much new information in his history classes. He found, on the other hand, that political theory was “living and breathing while history was dead.” He soon switched to political theory, minoring in math, and taking the odd film course. Regrettably, the university wouldn't add film to its minorable subjects until after he had too many math classes. Hass' efforts in math proved ultimately unsatisfactory, as he failed to finish the program. This possibly accounts for his immense dislike of rational choice theory, economics and most attempts at mathematical explanations of social phenomena.

However, Hass did reasonably well in political studies under the tutelage of a small faculty, which somehow managed to be quite diverse and balanced. Due to the size of the institution, Hass was not able to fully concentrate on political theory, but this probably benefited him in the long run, as it forced him to not specialize to the extent academics often have to. He was good enough he got into one master's program (out of the dozens he applied to). He also claimed to have won some kind of prize for scholarship, but there is no record to support this claim, and his marks certainly don't suggest that this was true.

This new education forced Hass to confront his opinions head on and he changed his views a number of times, as many people do at this time in their lives. For his first year of university, he was a self-confessed “individualist anarchist” which can be seen as a reaction to his previously authoritarian notions of government. Realizing these ideas were untenable, he soon moved closer to reality by becoming a somewhat confused libertarian for the majority of his studies. Spiritually, he was even less certain, as he variously described himself as “agnostic,” “interested in those eastern [religions],” “a spiritual Jungian,” “a deist,” “a freethinker,” and various other obscure labels. His pervasive cynicism doesn't seem to have appeared here for the first time, but rather seems to be a product of some earlier stage of life we can only guess at.

While he was at university, he participated in an exchange program, and he was sent to *Deakin University*, in Victoria, Australia. The chief benefit of this experience was to experience “another culture,” as much as Australia can be labelled such. By his own account, he didn't do much school work, and spent the entire time travelling, reading and watching Australian TV, footy and cricket, and thereby fully experiencing Australian “culture.”

He attended *McMaster University*, in Hamilton Ontario, for his masters degree in political theory and comparative politics. There he further refined his ideas, as his libertarianism was moderated by maturity and further study, and where he studied the Bible, as well as early liberalism. Although he had initially rejected existentialism as “nihilistic” he began to find that it fit with other ideas he was interested in, though judging by his essays he couldn't express this very well at that time.

The ideas were appearing, but they had not coalesced. He couldn't adequately express them in any kind of essay. His application for a PhD focuses on the notion of “humanizing” Robert Nozick's libertarianism with psychology. However, this idea is vague and undeveloped. He wasn't accepted anywhere, which made him bitter and despondent, and he resolved to “show those ivory tower fuckers.” He also had a number of book ideas then, including a book about justice which would conclude with a chapter on Augustine, and the claim that “there is no such thing as justice, it's a pipe dream,” and a book about capitalism and its alternatives. Neither got past the planning stage, much like his numerous “screenplays.” After the rejection, he spent the majority of the next year reading extensively on a wide variety of subjects including biology, psychology, physics, economics, business and, especially, literature.

He continued to live in Hamilton, for financial reasons, and began writing this book. He claimed to have a number of reasons, besides his vanity, to have embarked on this task. As a Canadian, he felt it was his duty to write the book he had in him, given that it came to concern. He had long found the Canadian form of government lacking, regardless of his political views, and so he had formulated some reforms for the system over the years. Further, he desired to read a theory book that

was at least somewhat accessible to the general public, as nothing he read in university seemed to be. Since he couldn't find one, he decided to write one. However, this goal seems to have been put aside, as the final product is far from accessible. He picked theory because he regarded day to day politics as “low, beneath me,” which is the attitude of many so-called philosophers. He felt it was important to regularly defend the virtues of liberal democracy against its opponents. In the past these opponents had included communism, but now he listed them as chiefly “fundamentalist religion and postmodernist political theory.” Though he was originally almost exclusively concerned with the latter, he came to realize that postmodernism was an academic fad, and fundamentalist religion and fundamentalist politics of any kind were the real dangers. Since both groups appeal to the young, Hass felt it imperative that he write a book that younger people could read and relate to. He claimed biological justification by fittingly quoting a biologist.

During and shortly after puberty human beings have an indubitable tendency to loosen their allegiance to all traditional rites and social norms of their culture, allowing conceptual thought to cast doubt on their value and to look around for new and perhaps more worthy ideals. There probably is, at that time of life, a definite sensitive period for a new object-fixation...called imprinting. If...the clever demagogue, well versed in the dangerous art of producing supra-normal stimulus situations, gets hold of young people at the susceptible age, he finds it very easy to guide their object-fixation in a direction subservient to his political aims (Lorenz 1966, 230).

As Hass put it, “get'em while their young.”<sup>1</sup> Yet one more reason is that he worried too many of his friends cared only about American politics. He wanted to change that.

Incidentally, Hass was also a fantastic minesweeper player. He was not a world champion, but he had the quality of a world champion. The reason why he wasn't a world champion is because he was so good. He was so good that he had to play custom games, as 'Expert' wasn't hard enough. This disqualified him from the Minesweeper World Championships.

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<sup>1</sup> “Apparently they're showing movies to kindergärtners. That's fine, but they shouldn't be showing cartoons. They should be showing Chaplin.” - Hass